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HOME AGAIN!



'No nation,' said Albert Smith, 'makes such a fuss about its "tea-kettle comforts" as the English. No nation is so notoriously anxious to get away from them.' 'And having accomplished this object,' said somebody else, 'no people is more unfeignedly thankful to return to them.' This is true enough. The pleasure of starting on your autumnal holiday is only exceeded by the joy you experience in getting home again. It will not

do to say so; therefore I must whisper in your ear, most long-suffering of readers—be you gentle, be you savage, or be you indifferent—that a holiday is not always the rampant success that it is supposed to be. Often a man endures a month or six weeks' unmitigated wretchedness; and it is only after he has been at home for a considerable period and has leisure to re-study *Murray*, and time to forget all the worry he endured, and the inconveniences he had to submit to, that he begins to talk of the jolly time he had in Switzerland, the glorious days he spent at the Italian lakes, and the delicious hours passed in the Black Forest. I know this to be a fact. I have seen men departing for what they please to term their holiday with the grimdest expression on their countenances, and I have seen them returning to work with the look of boys who were just turned out of school.

If our time was properly regulated and we did not live at this high-pressure speed, we should not want any holiday at all. Each day would have its proper portion set apart for rest and recreation. There are people who say that Bank Holidays confer a deal of misery

and expense upon the public in general, and there are others who aver that the ordinary autumnal jaunt is only the Bank Holiday on a large scale. But I will have nothing to do with such individuals, who trade in cynicism, wholesale, retail, and for exportation. What I desire to show is, that returning after a holiday is by no means the condition of misery that it is usually supposed to be; that we need not pity people because their holiday is over. No. In many cases we may tender our most hearty congratulations.

Home come the tourists from Calais to Dover,
 Swiftly and surely borne over the foam;
 Home when the holiday season is over,
 Worn out with travel, they're glad to come home!
 Glad to leave polyglot phrases behind them,
 Charmed to revisit their haunts and the Club;
 Glad to be going where letters may find them,
 Joyed to return to their home and their 'tub'!

There is no doubt whatever about the truth of this. Any day you choose to take your stand upon the Admiralty Pier at Dover, in the autumn season, will convince you of this fact. Dover is well behaved. It does not indulge in the 'seaside manners' of Folkestone. It does not say much, but, like the old gentleman's parrot, it thinks a great deal. As the crowd creep up from the Foam, and tumble into the train, or stroll along the pier, one cannot help thinking how happy every one seems to be. Look at that tall stalwart man in a cheviot suit. If I mistake not, he is the author of that wonderful little book of travel, entitled *All over Europe, with a Flannel-shirt and a Tooth-brush*. He has been knocking about anywhere you please during the last three months. He has

only seen a newspaper occasionally; he has never received his letters at the proper time; his flannel-shirt has shrunk, and his boots are played out. Did you see with what eagerness he bought a copy of the *Times*, and any papers he could lay hands on, just now? Cannot you imagine his joy at dining quietly at his club to-night; in finding a dozen white shirts in his bedroom; in perceiving once more his capacious bath and the ample supply of Baden towels? If you are dissatisfied with your lot in London, it is well worth while to go away for a time, in order that you may discover how well off you once were.

Again, those two merry damsels, with their delicately bronzed faces—‘so kissed by ardent sunny ray, that bright carnation blushes through the brown’—have had a pretty rough time of it at Chamonix lately. They have been mountaineering; they have been as far as the Grands Mulets; and they have been travelling with less luggage than one would deem possible for girl-kind ever to be satisfied with. Look at their shabby serge dresses, their battered little hats. They have been out on the clamber for the last six weeks; they have worn short petticoats, woollen stockings, hob-nailed boots, and scarlet knicker-bockers. They have ‘lady’s-maided’ one another, and have made themselves smart for *table d’hôte* by means of bright ribbons and paper cuffs and collars. Do not you suppose these two damsels will give a little shriek of delight when they enter their own bedroom this evening, and find a blazing fire, and their own maid Hemlett—Hemlett the rosy-cheeked, the ever-thoughtful, the unobtrusive—has placed out an array of clothing that positively astonishes them? Don’t you ima-

gine how highly these young ladies appreciate the advantage of being home again? Do they not discover that they have been living in luxury all their lives without knowing anything about it?

Observe also, if you please, that stout Paterfamilias. He is smiling as he has never smiled since he left the shores of England many weeks ago. He yielded to the importunities of his wife and daughters, and he has been dragging out a weary existence in being 'chivied'—as he would term it—from one place to another all about the Continent. He has met few people that he knew, and those few he did not like; he has had his meals at irregular intervals; he has been kept up late, and hurried from his bed at a very early hour to see a sunrise that turned out a decided failure; he has been puzzled by the rate of exchange, and worried by debased coinage of every description; he has made himself ill by drinking curious vintages, and has become weary of pictures, of palaces and antiquities. I own I should like to see this gentleman, when he has been mollified by an excellent dinner, and is sitting with his toes under his own mahogany, this evening, and leisurely sipping a glass of that particular port that he sets such store by. He would tell you most emphatically that you can never enjoy the comforts of home till you have been abroad.

Home come the *brignesses* divinely capricious,
Hush! the light laughter that gladdened the tide;
Silent the *Plage* is at Deauville delicious;
Quiet the shore is at Weymouth and Ryde!
Gone are the girls who once carelessly flirted,
Sirens are scarce upon Scarborough Sands;
Whitby is empty and Filey deserted!
Mute is the Teutonic braying of bands!

Cold blows the blast round the sweet Isle
of Thanet,
Ramsgate is chilly and Margate is slow—
The sand's a Sahara—where e'er you may
scan it;
The season is over, 'tis better to go!

The break up of the bathing-season is also frequently hailed with joy. English landladies have not, with some very few exceptions, learned the art of making their lodgings so attractive as to cause people to prefer them to their own homes. A few wet days are sufficient to make you quite disgusted with seaside lodgings or seaside hotels. It is astonishing how immediately seaside life is thrown out of gear directly the weather interferes with out-of-door life. Any one who knows anything about large families can testify to the truth of this. The ordinary course of events is for Paterfamilias to devote himself to his newspaper after breakfast. The boys go out swimming or sailing. The girls, Rosie and Milly, after they have disported themselves in the water in coquettish bathing-dresses, dry their back-hair over a novel on the beach. The girlettes, as some one once called young girls, 'séeing every female between fourteen and forty is called a girl nowadays'; some one else called them 'green peaches'; another somebody 'big babies'; it is difficult to know what to call a girl in the days of her short-frockery—well, the girlettes, Dolly and Poppie, betake themselves to their favourite amusement of wading, with reefed petticoats and closely-furled pantaloons, and laying their shapely little pink legs on the seashore. All these amusements go on day after day with praiseworthy regularity, till one day it rains from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night, and then everybody begins to find out how inferior to

home the whole place is. Mama has discovered what stuffy places seaside lodgings are; Pater does not get his newspaper; the boys are wranglesome; the girls are bored because they have read every novel in the house, and cannot get to the library to get any more; the girlettes, having quarrelled and slapped one another, have been subsequently slapped by mama, and sent to bed. Then, O, then does not the whole family hail with delight the idea of getting home again? A few wet days in October and a few chilly evenings seal the fate of a seaside season, whereas a fine October is the thing that a landlady desires above everything.

Getting back again towards the end of October is really mighty pleasant. In the first place you feel pretty certain that the fine weather is nearly at an end; in the second the evenings are getting short; and in the third most of your friends have returned. You get back then just at the right period. You have passed over that time when twilight is so tiresome—when it is not dark enough to dine by candle-light and too dark to dine by daylight, when you do not know whether the curtains should be drawn or not. Now there is no doubt about it; you have everything shut up at six o'clock, the candles lighted and the fire burning. That, by the way, is another great luxury—a good fire in the chilly October evenings. How you would have liked to light a fire at your lodgings at Sniggleby-in-the-Sand! But you feared your landlady, and were doubtful as to the exorbitant price she would charge for coals by the scuttle. There were also a lot of abominable coloured shavings, there were stuffings of paper, there were 'bright bars'—those most abominable and Pecksnifian pre-

tenders of the domestic hearth—and other domestic barriers, which stood in the way of accomplishing your object. Now how you enjoy seeing the flames leap up the chimney, and noting the ruddy glow that dances and glitters over every polished surface in the room! How you gaze on the fire; how you interchange silent thought with it! What a world of romance, what companionship, what witchery, is raised by a few pennyworths of coals and a few farthings' worth of wood! You really think to yourself that throughout the whole of your holiday you never, no, never enjoyed anything equal to the fire in your study the evening you came home.

Not the least part of the enjoyment of your return is finding a heap of letters, and discovering how most of them have answered themselves by not having their envelopes opened. I suppose one could scarcely pursue this course in a large house of business, but I am certain that for ordinary correspondence, it would save a vast amount of trouble. Just keep your letters for a month without looking at them, and you would be surprised to find how few of them require replying to. Probably you might get into trouble, and you might be accounted rude by your friends—that is altogether another matter. As a question of saving yourself worry in the matter of epistolary correspondence, my plan would be most undoubtedly successful. You will perchance discover also of what very little value or importance you are in that world in which you possibly considered yourself to be a not inconsiderable luminary. Indeed, I generally find that my world gets on somewhat better in my absence than my presence. If one goes away for a few weeks it is astonishing what a number of important

events venture to come off in one's absence. If you miss reading your *Times* one day, you always find it contains the most important news; so if you go out of town, you generally discover that the most startling events take place in your absence. Your rich uncle dies, Jones gets his divorce, Bullery has been invited by the committee to retire from his club; and you cannot help thinking that if you had waited in town on the expectation of these things occurring, they would never have taken place. Directly your back is turned, it is astonishing the liberty events will take.

Now it is that the club smoking-room begins to regain its wonted population. One by one do the wanderers return, and every evening brings an accession to the ranks of tobacconalians. They come with brown faces, with the brightness and freshness that plenty of exercise and prolonged sojourn in the open air alone can give. You hear tales of travel and anecdotes of adventure and comparisons of hotel-bills on all sides. Just dream in your easy-chair and watch the rings of smoke wreath up from your cigarette, and you will be perfectly astonished at the patchwork of travel-talk that pervades the room.

'Stopping for a couple of months at Boulogne. One of the prettiest girls that I ever—'

'Killed a five-and-thirty pound salmon just below the Captain's Throw at Ballyshannon—'

'Met him with Pal at the Kaltbad—'

'Very nearly slipped down a crevasse at Chamouni—'

'Met Edmund looking "awfully fit" Homburg—'

'Had capital fishing with Nomad in the Wutach—'

'Spent six weeks in a house-boat on the Upper Thames, and had a rare good time of it—'

'Very good bathing we had at the Lide—'

'Johnny and Clem and the whole lot at Scarborough—'

'Nearly poisoned with stinks at Amsterdam—'

'Had rain every day for a fortnight at Coniston—'

'Stopping with Loo at Baveno—'

'Awfully pleasant at Etretat; girls bathing, so like Du Maurier's sketch—'

'A good time at Tunbridge Wells; Penshurst, Pantiles, and all the rest of it. Whom should I meet there but—'

'With the Major at Dover—'

And so the gossip flies about.
And so the smoke wreathes up.
And so the fire blazes and sparkles.
And so London gradually awakens into life; and despite of all the enjoyments of change of air and scene, few people are sorry to be
'Home Again.'

THE TINY TRAVELLER.



JOHN'S WIFE.

By C. M. HAWKSFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'WHO WINS MISS BURTON? A TALE OF THE LONDON SEASON.'

CHAPTER I.

'GOING to be married! Why, John, at your time of life the idea is simply ridiculous.'

I was the speaker—I, who had lived with my brother for the last twenty years, kept his house, provided for all his comforts ; I, who had never hitherto doubted but that I should continue to do so as long as I lived.

The startling information that came hesitatingly from his lips on that May evening, as we sat together after our usual six-o'clock dinner, quite took away my breath.

I saw John wince ; but I fancied a little straightforward speaking might put the folly out of his head ; so I continued,

'I should as soon have thought of marrying myself, John, as believing this of you, if it had not been *you* who had told me ; and even now I fancy you must be joking.'

'But a man, Harriette—a man often marries late in life.'

'I am glad you call it *late* in life ; but for my part I can't see why, if a man wants to encumber himself with a wife, he does not do so before he is more than half a century old.'

'But I am not more than half a century—'

'Stuff and nonsense!' I replied. 'There is nothing so true as figures except facts, and the *facts* are these ;' and I reached down from a bookcase the great family Bible, and turned to the fly-leaf. 'Let me see,' I said,

just glancing at John's face, which looked flushed and pained, 'your next birthday makes you fifty-one ; for ten and seven are seventeen, and ten are—'

John rose suddenly and went to the window, and I shut up the book and followed him.

It was a lovely evening, and the early spring flowers in the garden sent up a sweet perfume. We were both fond of gardening, and devoted a good deal of time to it. At least, I did ; for those very flowers reminded me that lately John had not been nearly so much at home as usual, sometimes remaining absent for a day, sometimes two. Where? Yes, that was the question. He had always said it was to visit an old college friend, but my mind now refused to believe anything.

'If this news is really true, John, you will tell me *who it is*.'

'Of course I will ; and I know, though you feel severely now, that when you understand that my happiness—'

'Who is she?'

'Marchmont's sister.'

'I did not know he had a sister.'

'She is a step-sister ; his father married twice.'

'I hope, John, *her* age at least is suitable.'

The colour mounted perceptibly to his face.

'I will not tell you anything about her ; you must see her, and then judge.'

I meant to do so, but I did not say anything more about it then,

for a feeling of bitterness rose in my mind. Had I not loved this one brother all my life, devoted myself to him, putting aside all thoughts of marriage, shunning the opportunities which might have given me a home of my own? And when he had asked me, on my mother's death twenty years ago, to come and keep his house and make it mine, I had never hesitated; and now, if he married, it could no longer be my home, as it had been formerly. I was only three years older than John; but I felt as if a great gap divided us, he thinking of reentering on life, whilst I—

'John,' I said—and my tone was hard, for I feared to give way, and something in my throat seemed to choke me—'I have ceased to make you happy. It must be so, since you are seeking out new ties.'

He turned round suddenly and took both my hands in his, and, looking straight into my face with an earnest expression in his deep gray eyes, exclaimed,

'If you could only know, Harriette, what I feel about you—about all your care of me, beginning from the time when I was a mere boy—you would not doubt my love; you would not pain me by saying the things you are saying this evening. My love for you is so great I cannot bear even a cloud—'

I turned away suddenly, and gave a short laugh.

'You are growing sentimental, John, in your old age. Is it the result of your new schooling?'

The flush mounted again to his face; he made no reply, but went out of the room.

I stood as he had left me by the window, for some time trying to grasp the reality of the new idea which had been presented to me, and unconsciously my mind

wandered to the bed of mignonette that was beneath. We had planted it together; he had turned back the mould, whilst I scattered the seed; and now it was springing into a mass of delicate leaves and flowers, scenting the whole air, and bringing a crowd of memories with it—memories of old days that would never come back again. John could never be the same to me as he had been. He would have new interests, new ties; he must find all he wanted, all that he could care for, in the woman he made his wife.

His wife! She would rule his house, the house I had so long looked upon as *mine*, and where for the future I should be nothing. It would be her task now to nurse him in sickness, to comfort and advise him. I saw before me quite plainly the position I should soon have to take. If the trial had come earlier I could have borne it better; but as it was, the tears rushed to my eyes, the tears I had been striving to keep back. I loved John so dearly that losing him like this seemed a living death. And after all, who would care for him as I had done? Every action of my life for those last twenty years had sole reference to him and his comfort. 'My brother' had been the words that had fallen most often from my lips. How many nights had I waited up for him and listened for his footstep! and now when he came back it would not be to me—I should not be the one to whom he would confide all the little details of his absence. The first pressure of his hand, the first kiss, would not be mine. Were those my tears really falling? Pshaw, I was getting an old fool myself! So I brushed them away and went upstairs.

No further mention was made

of John's engagement that evening, and we were both rather silent. The evening was indeed nearly gone before we met again, and tea occupied, or appeared to occupy, our attention—mine, at all events, and John took up a book.

It was not till I went to bed that I made a resolve, which I meant to carry out on the following day; and this was, to go by myself and see John's future wife. John would, I knew, be obliged to attend a magistrates' meeting. He had been made a magistrate in consideration of the respect felt for him by all the county, and hitherto it had always been a great source of pride to me, this acknowledgment of his talents, when numbers of others, who held a far higher social position, were overlooked. John certainly was an unoccupied man; he had originally been designed for the Church, and had gone as far as taking holy orders; but ill-health obliged him to give up the idea of active work, so he went abroad instead and travelled, laying up stores of wisdom and experience during the years when I was devoting myself to my parents, who were both more or less invalids.

Ah, well, that was over at last, and John came back and took me home.

'Harriette,' he said, 'I shall never marry.'

I laughed then, for I expected he would; but the blow had fallen after twenty years, after I had given up even the thought of it; and now, as I lay in my bed in the blue room, which room had always been mine since I came to The Cedars, I was thinking almost calmly of going to see John's wife.

I had spoken rather bitterly to John about his age; but then, what was *his* getting old to *mine*—mine, too, after all the years I

had fancied myself at home? There I was at nearly fifty-five, and no fireside belonged of right to me—at nearly fifty-five, and beginning the world over again; for to stay in John's house after he married I determined nothing should induce me. I had a small income of my own independently of John's, who had, besides what our parents could leave us, been made the heir of a bachelor uncle, who had willed him six hundred a year and the pretty house in which we lived, situated in one of the midland counties, and taking its name of The Cedars in consequence of having some of those lovely wide-spreading trees on the lawn, which, tradition said, had originally been brought over from Mount Lebanon. I should of course have to bring down my ideas; but anything was preferable to the thought of being lorded over by John's wife.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning John went away almost immediately after breakfast, and I commenced preparations for my little visit, putting on a dark-gray silk dress—the one I always wore on state occasions—a handsome black-silk mantle, and a bonnet—well, not too much in the fashion, but, I flattered myself, becoming my years; and taking up a silk umbrella, without which I never went out, in case it should rain, I sallied forth, saying to myself, 'At all events, John's future wife shall see that the family she is about to enter have no need but to look high, standing as they do in the world.'

The village of Kingsnorth, where my brother's house was situated, although three miles from any large town, enjoyed the advantage

of a wayside station, and towards this I bent my steps. The train which passed at eleven would leave me at Ivybridge at about twelve, and from there I intended walking on to Mr. Marchmont's vicarage, for I had often heard John say it was not above half a mile further on, and accessible through some very pretty lanes.

The day was hot, and the carriage seemed covered with dust. I always hated the railway, and on this occasion more so than ever; but, having made up my mind, I determined to make the best of it. When we reached Ivybridge, there appeared to be but few passengers getting out, and no one going my way; so asking the porter to direct me to Mr. Marchmont's vicarage, I started on my way alone. I arrived at last, both ho and tired, and walked slowly up the entrance-drive, which was hemmed in on either side by flowering shrubs and whole masses of geraniums. The vicarage itself was an old-fashioned house, with pointed gables and deep mullioned windows; with wisteria and roses climbing all round, so as almost to completely hide the red-brick walls. The garden extended far on either side, whilst a little to the left the Norman tower of a church was seen nestling in among the trees.

So this, I thought, is where John has been weaving his dream, living out his fool's paradise. My ring was quickly answered, and my inquiry as to whether Miss Marchmont was at home answered in the affirmative. The hall struck deliciously cool after my hot walk, and a desire to rest came over me; but I put it aside—I had my work to do. The drawing-room door was opened, and I went in. The darkness of the room at first almost blinded me, coming as I had done out of the

noontide glare into the soft shade given by the lace curtains and the closed jalousies; but in a minute or two things grew more distinct, and I perceived that I was not the only occupant.

A girl was sitting on a low seat in one of the recesses of the mulioned windows; her back was towards me, but her face slightly in profile—a pretty little face, with all the soft touches of childhood stamped upon it still. The golden-tinted hair, more in waves than curls, was turned back from her ears, and hung over her shoulders. Her dress was plain white, the collar only being relieved by a simple knot of blue ribbon.

I had refused to give my name, so I remained, standing as I was for a minute, unannounced. Then the shutting of the door startled the girl, who got up suddenly, letting fall, as she did so, the heavy volume which had been lying on her lap, the contents of which she had been reading. I don't know but that I was relieved when I found that I might have a few minutes' respite before I saw Miss Marchmont, so I intimated to the girl not to call any one.

'I have not told you my name,' I said; 'but I fancy every one in this house knows my brother, Mr. Warner?'

She looked at me steadily for a moment, and then came forward and offered her hand.

'My brother and Mr. Marchmont are great and also old friends; but my visit here to-day is to his sister, *Miss Marchmont*.'

'Then you will take off your bonnet and rest?' she said.

I untied the strings and sat down, but the girl remained standing, with a wistful expression in her blue eyes.

'Is *Miss Marchmont* at home?' I asked.

A soft laugh answered me, and '*I am Miss Marchmont!*' came in childish accents from her lips.

I started up. '*You!* it cannot be—it is not possible. Surely my brother has not been so mad as to ask you to be his *wife*?

A flush spread over her face, and she drew herself up; but I continued:

'*You*, who are young enough to be his grandchild! How old are you?'

'Seventeen; nearly eighteen.'

And it was said with a touch of womanly dignity, which might have amused me had the circumstances been less real than they unfortunately were.

'Do you know how old my brother is?' I asked; 'because I will tell you. He will be fifty-one his next birthday, whilst you will be only eighteen; eighteen and ten are twenty-eight, and ten are thirty-eight, and ten are forty-eight, and three are fifty-one—*thirty-three years' difference!*'

'It does not matter to me *how* old he is,' she replied, in the same tone she had used before. 'He has chosen me. He thinks me old enough, and—and—he *loves* me—'

But here her voice faltered a little, and her head bent over the hands she was nervously clasping together.

'Stuff and nonsense! He is too old to fall in love, unless perhaps it had been with some one suitable. As for your life, child, it would be made miserable, living always with a man whose tastes and habits are a lifetime in advance of yours.'

'Nothing can alter it now,' she said.

'Your brother—when do you expect him? when will he be at home, for I *must* see him?'

'He won't be back till this evening; perhaps not till to-morrow morning.'

I had made up my mind to wait for him; but as it was, how could I? I sat down and unfastened my cloak, and as I did so a remembrance of the feeling with which I had so carefully put on my best clothes flashed upon me. Could it be *this* child I had meant to impress with the dignity of all things pertaining to John? I fancied then that, had I found John's choice suitable, I had been prepared for being at least reconciled to giving up my rights, and retiring; but to put them into these baby-hands—to leave his fireside, knowing that he had no one capable of managing for him—'O John, that it should have come to this!'

The next train which stopped at Kingsnorth did not leave Ivybridge till three. But I could not stay at the vicarage; I did not want to say anything harsh, and I feared I might if I remained.

'Good-bye, Miss Marchmont,' I said, refastening my cloak and bonnet, and rising as I spoke. 'If I have seemed harsh, remember that, compared to you, I am an old woman, and see more plainly than you do the consequences that follow an ill-assorted marriage.'

She gave me her hand, and I saw the tears rising to her eyes.

'Poor child,' I exclaimed; 'but I do not blame you.'

She took her hand suddenly away, and flinging herself down upon the sofa, sobbed as if her heart would break. I waited a few minutes, watching the soft golden head, on which the sun, which was creeping in through the jalousies, seemed to leave a ray of light; and by one of those curious freaks of memory my thoughts went back, and brought before me a scene that had happened long and long ago. I was a girl once more, and the July sun was shining, and the birds

were singing, whilst the voice I was never more to hear had whispered its last words of parting, and my heart seemed breaking. But time had effaced the childish wound years before; still the remembrance of it softened me at that moment. I went across the room, and took Miss Marchmont's hand in mine as I gently said,

'Good-bye. You must not be vexed with me. I have your *real* welfare at heart; think well over what I have said, and that I have said it as a friend who wishes to point out to you what others may have neglected doing, and what my experience tells me is right.'

Then without another word I left the room, went through the cool flagged hall, and was once more out of doors and on my way back to the station.

When I reached home, my first act was to take off and put away my fine clothes in the drawers, and resume again my every-day costume. After that I sat down and waited for John's return. How long he was in coming! Generally he returned in time for dinner; but the hour passed, and I had to dine alone, and it was not till nearly eleven o'clock that I heard the hall-door open. John looked tired, but he stooped to kiss me, as he always did, saying,

'I was over-persuaded to stay and dine at Sir William Acton's. I hope you did not wait for me, Harriette.'

'I waited; but that did not signify; I have waited before, John.'

He put his hand on mine with a caressing movement, which he sometimes used.

'Have you been dull to-day, Harriette, or have you been out?'

'Yes, John, I have been out—further away from home than I have been for a long while.'

'Where?'

'To Ivybridge.'

He took his hand suddenly from off mine.

'Harriette, why did you not tell me you were going?'

'Perhaps,' I replied, 'it would have been better if I had; I should, at all events, have been spared the painful surprise that waited me. *John, you can't really mean to marry that child!*'

John's face paled, and by the lamplight I was attracted to observe the gray hairs which had begun to mingle with the brown. He looked older to-night, I fancied, than I had ever thought him, and this gave me courage to speak.

'I went to Ivybridge, expecting to find a woman in Miss Marchmont—some one, John, who could have taken up her proper position in the county as your wife, some one who would be a companion to you; as it is—'

'As it is, she is the only woman I have ever cared for since—you know, Harriette, since when. I thought I should never care for any one again. I never meant to have loved Dora more than I should have loved any sister of Marchmont's. I was carried on imperceptibly till—till—'

I did not speak, so he continued,

'Till I found out how very dear she had become, and then, before I let her know anything about it, I spoke to Marchmont fully and candidly; and he, far from looking upon it as you do, was perfectly satisfied that if she cared for me, and—'

'No child like that,' I exclaimed hastily, 'could know her own mind. She has never, perhaps, had a lover of any kind, and her vanity is flattered; remember this in years to come, when she will still be a girl and *you*—'

'O Harriette, why torture me with prognostications of the fu-

ture? Whilst I am happy in the present, why not allow me to remain so?

'Because your foundation is on sand, John. I love you also; I have loved you all these years, and I ask you to give it up.'

John took a rapid turn in the room; then standing still before me, he replied,

'If I thought it for *her* happiness I would do so even now, Harriette; but my little Dora—'

I laughed. 'The feelings of seventeen, John, will not be so hopelessly involved. Send her a doll, and see if that might not prove a sufficient consolation.'

Something like anger spread itself over John's face; but it passed away, and he said gently,

'Harriette, you are vexed and you are disappointed in me, so I forgive you; but remember, Harriette, the hard things you are now saying are about my *wife*. I am so far influenced by your opinion that to-morrow I will go to Ivybridge, speak again to Marchmont, telling him your opinion, and offer Dora her release.'

I smiled grimly as I thought how well *she* knew it already; but I said nothing.

'If,' he continued, 'Dora still wishes it, I shall carry out my engagement.'

'John, you are your own master; I have only done and said all this because I thought it my duty, and if the future should turn out as you *don't* now expect, you won't blame me. I feel, John, that I have lost you—that a baby-face has come between us; but I shall go away and—'

'Harriette, you will not leave us; so long as I have a home, my sister must share it. Harriette, you are not *seriously* thinking of leaving?' And John took both my hands, and looked into my face. 'Harriette, I cannot spare

you, now that we have been together so many years.'

I had to gulp down something that was like a sob, but I only partly conceded the point.

'John, I am nothing to you now; you will be better alone.' And I took up my candle and rose to go.

He opened the door for me.

'Remember that room will be yours always, Harriette, and I shall always be your brother, and The Cedars your home.'

I did not answer, but went straight up-stairs, feeling already a *guest* in my brother's house.

CHAPTER III.

I FELT perfectly convinced in my own mind of what would be the result of John's visit to Ivybridge. Of course Mr. Marchmont would not wish the engagement given up, when it offered so many advantages to his little sister, who was, I made no doubt, taken by him through kindness; for I now remembered having heard of some stepbrothers, so if he was expected to provide for them also, the marriage of Dora with a man like my brother would be most desirable. I had always hitherto respected Mr. Marchmont, but now I longed to see him and speak my mind. But wishing was no use, and before we met again it was too late.

I saw by John's face, the moment he came in after his visit to Ivybridge, that my worst fears were confirmed. He looked ten years younger, and was brimming over with hilarity like a schoolboy. He kissed me gaily, and said it was 'All right,' and that Marchmont had behaved, as he always did, like an own brother; and, moreover, the wedding was fixed to take place quite quietly,

early the following month, from his house, and that I of course was expected to go.

But of this arrangement I would not hear. After what had passed, I determined to keep out of being present at the ceremony. I would only consent to remain and prepare the house for them, and then, just before their return, go on a visit to an old friend.

To this also John objected, wishing to persuade me to be at home to receive them; but I insisted, and so it was finally settled.

'You know you have your home here,' John said the night he wished me good-bye. 'The blue room will be kept for you exclusively; and, Harriette, you must try and love my little Dora, for we can be so happy all together if you only will.'

I carried out all my plans; I prepared the house, making such little alterations as it now required; and a few days before the bride and bridegroom returned, I packed up my things and went away. The lady with whom I intended to stay had been my school companion and friend years ago, and the friendship had been in some degree kept up. At all events, I had received on several occasions the most pressing invitations to visit her in her north-country home; so that now I felt no scruple in availing myself of the opportunity, and going. She received me most kindly, and we tried to fill in the blank intervals that had elapsed. Her home was pretty, and some of her family, who had grown up and married, were settled in the immediate neighbourhood, so we were not dull. But somehow I could not settle. The thought of John haunted me. I felt so utterly separated from him, more especially as I seldom heard from them. Once or twice since their marriage a

letter had come in Dora's childish handwriting, and John's name recurred often, but only in connection with places they had visited or things they had seen. In his own letters he spoke frequently of Dora, but I felt that unless I saw him I should never know if he were really happy or not. My warnings had estranged his confidence, and no little details came to enlighten me.

Mrs. Marriott suggested that, since my old home was in a measure broken up, I should remain with her altogether; and I partly consented, writing first to John and telling him my *possible* intention. John's letter pained me; for although he did not urge my acceptance of the offer, he did not negative it; and I fancied I gathered from what he said a wish, perhaps his, perhaps Dora's, that I should come to the arrangement I had suggested, and *not* return again to them. That determined me. Was I not John's only sister? had I not been everything to him hitherto? was I to drop so entirely into the background, see him only at rare intervals, and have his affections steadily alienated from me by his baby-wife?

No, never! I refused Mrs. Marriott's offer, leaving my brother to suppose I had accepted it, or, at all events, that I was undecided; and one day, quite unexpected by them, I returned to The Cedars. I left my luggage at the little Kingsnorth station, and walked up to the house quite alone. The garden was looking brilliant with summer flowers, and a kind of dreamy beauty was upon everything. I fancied that I had never seen it look so pretty before, but I was afraid to linger. I crept in at the hall-door without meeting any one, and went straight upstairs to my own room.

Everything was as I had left it, only the blinds were down, and the bed unmade. Hearing a foot-step outside I peeped cautiously, but found it was only Anne the old servant. She started so on seeing me that I feared she would betray my arrival; so, laying a finger on my lips, I beckoned her into the room, and closed the door.

'Anne,' I said, 'I have come back unexpectedly, wishing it to be a pleasant surprise to your master and mistress. Is your master at home?'

No; the master was out, but the mistress was in the garden. I drew back a portion of the blind and looked out. A slight girlish figure, dressed all in white, with soft golden hair passed behind the ears and falling over the shoulders, was slowly pacing up and down a shady bit of the lawn, just where the cedars spread their dark arms above her, and I recognised Dora. Her head was bent over a book which she held in her hand, but every now and then she would raise it and remain perfectly still in a listening attitude. I dropped the blind, glanced at my watch, and, seeing it was nearly five, knew that she expected my brother. I despatched Anne to get me some hot water, and removing my travelling things, I supplied myself with a dinner-dress from the wardrobe. That done, I returned to my post at the window; but not the same, for there was another which commanded a view of the front entrance.

Presently I heard a whistle, then the sound of quick feet, and Dora was flying down the walk and had passed out of sight.

In another few minutes she appeared again, but not alone, for she was leaning on my brother's arm and smiling up into his face. For a moment they paused, and

then she dropped his arm, an clasping both her hands behind her, danced backwards before him all the way up the walk. It was a child's act, expressive of a child's joy; and the little blue-kidslippers which she wore on her feet made her seem like a fairy-dancer, as they lightly touched and retouched the ground. But again on reaching the door she paused, and going back to my brother, put her arm once more caressingly through his, and so clinging to him they passed into the house and out of sight.

I dropped the blind and sat down. I did not know if anything had happened more than I expected, but I felt angry. What a contrast to the return home to which John had been used! I had never failed to greet him; but as a woman greets a man, and that too a man who had outlived his youth and left it far behind, even in feeling. Could Dora's conduct be acceptable to my staid brother John? My thoughts were interrupted by Anne.

'The master is home,' she said, 'and dinner is going in, so will you please to come down?'

'And they don't guess I am here?'

'O dear, no!'

'It will be a pleasant surprise,' I said. But I hardly know if I believed it, for I paused at the drawing-room door, reluctant to enter; then I turned the handle softly, and—

I scarcely know what I felt; but I did not advance a step, and I was unnoticed. I had already wondered how my brother, grave student as he was, could bear the constant fluttering round him of a child-wife; but I had not suspected that he himself could so far forget his dignity and his years as to be where I found him that day.

Dora was half sitting, half lying in a large armchair, whilst my brother was kneeling before her, in the very act of kissing the little blue-slippered feet.

Some involuntary movement of mine must have attracted them; for the next moment they were aware of my presence, and John had started up, exclaiming,

'Harriette, is it—can it—be you?'

'You took me for a ghost,' I said, as I advanced into the room.

'I cannot *even now* realise that it is your bodily presence.'

'I excuse you, and can believe in your being somewhat visionary, but you need not let it carry you so far.'

In the next instant his arm was round me, and both he and Dora were giving me a welcome.

'I have come as I have, thinking that when you both urged me to look upon The Cedars as my home, you meant it, and that is why I have refused all other invitations, and am here to-day.'

It may have been fancy, but at all events I thought I saw a glance exchanged between my brother and his wife. The dinner, however, being announced, John gave me his arm and tried to assume a gaiety I knew he was not feeling; for we were all, more or less, embarrassed.

In the dining-room Dora hesitated as to what seat she should take, when my brother, putting his hand on her shoulder, motioned her to the chair opposite his own, saying as he did so,

'Harriette will understand it, Dora.'

Of course I never meant again to take the place of honour in my brother's house; but it was very disagreeable having it pointed out to me the first day of my arrival, and it made me feel a visitor.

The conversation during dinner

was constrained, and Dora did her duties as hostess with a shy anxiety for my comfort which was hardly necessary in a house which I had ruled so many years. Anne was the only person who appeared thoroughly at her ease; and she informed me that my luggage had arrived and been taken up-stairs, with a cheerful respect that did more to reconcile me to the step I had taken than my brother's reiterated assurances that he was 'so glad to see me.'

The evening passed off somewhat heavily. First of all, John came, and sitting down by me tried to appear interested in the details of my visit to the north; but I saw his eyes wandering unconsciously to where Dora was standing, and presently he joined her, and she went to the piano and sang. After that they went into the garden, and remained so long, that I followed to remind them that the evening was too chilly to run such risks; but Dora only laughed.

'Remember, John,' I said, 'you are not so young as you were, and as people get on in years they must be careful.'

He flushed at the remark, and I guessed by it that his age was a sore subject. Surely this was only the first-fruit of the mistake he had made; and would not others come? Dora was merely a child, and perhaps happy now—happy at her importance and the new dignity of her position; but in the future how would it be?

Long after I went up to my room I heard John's step on the stair. He was whistling the air of a Spanish march, which I had not heard for years, since, indeed, he was a boy—well, a boy compared to what he was now. Then came soft whisperings; then a door shut, and all was still.

This was my coming home!

They had tried to make me welcome, but I felt somehow I was *not wanted*, and this, I said, after having sacrificed so much to John all my life ; but I will not grudge the remainder of it, and the day may yet be when he will come back to me.

CHAPTER IV.

I soon became settled as before at The Cedars, with *one* exception. I saw less of John. He spent more time at home, but it was with Dora. He would follow her about the garden, helping her to take cuttings of geraniums, plant or water, and do a thousand things he had never used to care about ; and if he went out, and Dora did not accompany him, she would be waiting, as I found her doing the first day I arrived, no matter even if it rained, for then she would wrap herself in a big cloak and let the rain-drops patter on her head, an infatuation I vainly urged her to give up ; but she would only smile a wistful pleading smile, and assuring me it did her no harm, as she had been used to it all her life, go out the very next time the opportunity occurred.

I sat more in my own room than I had used to do, seeing my presence was no longer required, and neither my brother nor my brother's wife made any objection. I interfered in the house as little as possible, except when I felt my brother's interests were being sacrificed to Dora's inexperience, and then I spoke ; but John never seemed quite pleased, whilst Dora was so childishly sensitive, that my duty was all the more disagreeable. Still I *did it*.

And so the autumn crept upon us, and gave way in turn to winter, and the winter set in with a will, promising to be more severe than it had been known in our

part of the country for years. It was at this time that an invitation came for John and his wife to a large ball given by one of the county families. The idea of their going never struck me, and I was more than astonished when I heard Dora say she had written the acceptance, which she did, as she handed a note to my brother to read. He glanced at me as he took it, but I did not speak till Dora had gone out of the room ; then I said,

' Surely, John, you are not thinking of driving ten miles to a ball, and in weather like this ?'

' I don't think I have any right to deny Dora all amusement, and—'

' And so you are going into dancing society at your time of life ! In my day a woman was expected to accommodate her tastes to her husband's.'

' And so she does ; it was my own wish she should go.'

' O, that alters the case ; but I think you are hardly wise in giving her a taste for amusements which you can't enjoy yourself.'

A cloud came across his face ; and I added,

' Putting her in the way of temptation.'

' What do you mean, Harriette ? explain yourself.'

' Dora is still a mere child, and hardly knows how much she would appreciate companions of her own age. At home she can make no comparisons, and at her brother's she was equally fortunate ; but in society, at balls, the case will be different.'

He was about to answer when Dora came back. She was cold with standing at the open door, and she put both her hands in her husband's as she sat down on a low stool at his feet. The cloud that had risen died out, as he stooped down to kiss the upturned face.

We shall see, I thought as I left the room, how all *this* will end.

By a curious coincidence, a week after the invitation to the ball had been received I met, whilst paying a visit in Kingsnorth, one of the daughters of the house. She expressed their ignorance of my return, and begged I would take a verbal invitation, and be present with my brother and his wife. The idea of accepting at first never entered my head; but I suddenly formed a resolution and determined to go. I did not mention anything about it to John or Dora, but I got out my long-hoarded purple-velvet dress, and arranged a cap of old point which had belonged to my grandmother, and this, together with buying a pair of gloves, completed my preparations, and on the eventful night, when I put them on, their effect gave me perfect satisfaction.

We had dined rather earlier than usual, as the carriage was to come for us a little before nine. Unfortunately it was snowing quite fast, and bitterly cold. When I had completed my dressing, which did not take long, I went down quietly and sat over the fire in a little study—John's especial sanctum—which was beyond, but which led out of the drawing-rooms. John had come down also, and was walking to and fro in the farther drawing-room in the restless way men have when put out of their usual habits, glancing now at the clock, now at the door. Then the carriage drove up and the bell rang, and at last there came a sound of rustling on the stairs, and Dora entered.

I had always been obliged to consider Dora pretty with the prettiness of youth; but her beauty had assumed quite a new character. Her dress was the same she had worn as a bride, white

satin, with a cloud of white lace over it, and a wreath of water-lilies in her hair. As she came in she gathered round her her trailing skirt and swept her husband a curtsey, opening her fan, holding it up to her face and glancing over it at him as she did so. It was the perfection of coquetry—*innate coquetry*. When she rose again my brother was still standing wrapt in admiration.

'Little Dora,' he said, 'I do not know you; what wave of the enchanter's wand has done it?'

'Am I always to be Cinderella—never to have a fairy godmother?'

John smiled.

'I am very proud of you, Dora; but see, here is your bouquet.'

And as he spoke he handed her a lovely bouquet, composed entirely of white and rare exotics, which at that time of year must have cost a little fortune, for we had nothing like them at The Cedars. She swept another curtsey; then putting down her fan and bouquet, raised both her arms, and rested her head on my brother's shoulder. He kissed her; then holding her from him exclaimed,

'Where is Harriette? Harriette must see you.'

'I am here,' I said, coming forward.

'Harriette, you dressed! Is it possible you are—'

'Yes, I am going to the ball.'

John and his wife both looked quite frightened.

'Is it anything so very wonderful,' I said, 'that I should go out, when you do it, John? And you need not be afraid, for I have been invited.'

'I am so glad,' exclaimed Dora; 'but why did you not tell us? And how well she looks, does she not?' and she laid her hand on my brother's arm.

'I am too old for flattery,' I said, 'and young enough to be impatient to be off; besides, it is hardly fair to keep the carriage waiting on such a night as this.'

John offered me his arm, but I refused, and resolutely insisted on having my back to the horses. The drive was by no means pleasant, being bitterly cold, in spite of feet-warmers and wraps; and it took us an hour and a half, so that it was half-past ten before we arrived, which was considered late for that part of the country. The house was brilliant with lights, and the sound of music began almost as soon as we entered the avenue. The host and hostess received us most graciously, whilst Dora evidently excited the greatest admiration. Even in the ball, where most of the county belles were assembled, she lost none of her attractions—she looked so young and fresh, a delicate flush lighting up her face, and her eyes sparkling with expectant enjoyment. John had not been to a party of this description for so many years, that as one by one the men he knew passed him they each exclaimed in surprise,

'You here, Warner! what *will* happen next?' and a number of other remarks of the same kind.

Dora was, of course, asked to dance. I thought my brother foolish in *allowing* it, and he might have prevented it, seeing that she told him she was quite amused remaining with him; but he insisted, and she went off with one of the sons of the house. John turned to me and offered his arm, and just as he did so a gentleman—some stranger who was standing close by—asked,

'Who is that lovely girl?

The answer must have told, for a surprised exclamation followed.

'He! you don't say so! Why,

he is old enough to be her grandfather!'

I glanced at John to see if he had heard it; but he made no sign except by taking his breath rather shorter, and biting his under lip.

'Are you going to play cards, John?'

'No, I shall remain here; and you?'

'I shall do the same.'

So we both found chairs and sat down; mutual friends came up, and we were soon in the midst of the whirl of what is called society. After every dance Dora came back to John, and as the evening advanced she seemed, instead of getting tired, to grow brighter and brighter. Surely John's experiment was a dangerous one, but I did not realise how dangerous till a little later. Dora was to dance a quadrille with a friend of my brother's, a man who had asked her out of compliment to him, and they were standing a little way off, waiting for the set to form, when a young man pushed to the front, and exclaimed as he seized her hand,

'I cannot be mistaken; you are Miss Marchmont?'

A crimson flush mounted to Dora's face, and she was about to speak when her partner interrupted her, saying,

'I see I shall have to reintroduce you in your new character. This lady is now Mrs. Warner.'

The young man dropped her hand with a gesture of surprise, turning so pale that I thought he would have fallen, when by a violent effort he so far recovered himself as to bend forward and say something in a low tone. Dora apparently acquiesced, and then joined the already waiting quadrille.

I saw that John had turned white even to the lips. He re-

cognised, as I did, the full significance of the situation ; but I was sure he would ask for an explanation as soon as the dance was over. Just as the last figure was ending, the lady of the house glided up, and begged my brother would allow her to introduce a Mrs. Wilberforce, whom she was desirous of his taking up to supper. I saw a refusal on John's face ; but he had no time—the lady was standing by, introduced, and his arm offered and accepted. John turned a wistful look as he left the room. The quadrille was over, and the young man was claiming Dora's hand.

When John returned, a waltz had begun, but Dora was not among the dancers. John did not offer to go and look for her, although I am sure he longed to do so.

'Have you had supper?' I said.

'No,' he replied abstractedly.

'Suppose, then, that we two old people go up together?'

'Presently, Harriette, presently.'

'You are so vigilant a chaperon you forget yourself, and I am hungry.'

'I am not vigilant, but I—I like to watch my little Dora enjoying herself.'

'Which she is now doing so thoroughly that you may be content to leave her for a little ;' and I got up as I said it.

John looked for a moment almost angry; then he smiled rather a sad smile and took me in to supper.

We did not remain long after that ; my brother seemed anxious to be off, and Dora did not ask to stay, although her dancing-card was full. The young man we did not see again till just as we got into the carriage ; then some one's hand came in at the window, and a voice wished Dora good-night.

We were very silent all the way

home. Dora lay with her head resting on my brother's arm, and spoke to him occasionally, but in whispers, so that I could not hear by reason of the noise of the wheels. The snow had ceased, and a hard frost set in, and although the moon and stars were shining we were obliged to go very slowly to prevent the horse from falling, so that it took two hours to get back. We separated almost immediately on our arrival, but I saw, when in the full light, that John looked worn and harassed, whilst Dora was still bright.

'I am only a *little* tired,' she said, 'and I have enjoyed myself so much—so very much.'

'You seemed to have met an old friend.'

'Yes, was it not strange? I have known him since we were children, when he used to call me his little wife. He has been abroad for two years, and did not know I was married. I hardly recognised my old name of Dora Marchmont, and he could not understand my other.' She laughed as she said it, and putting her arm through my brother's, they went up-stairs.

Poor John!

CHAPTER V.

THE next day we were all more or less tired, and the ball was hardly mentioned. John devoted himself as usual to Dora, making her lie on the sofa, and reading to her, or making her comfortable, in fact doing every little thing he fancied might please or amuse her. There was a hard frost outside, which I knew John particularly enjoyed ; but, contrary to his general custom, he refused to leave the house. Did he fear that the companion of Dora's childhood would come and continue his friendship, filling in the gaps

made by absence? However, the day waned, and he did not appear. The following morning, when I was sitting after breakfast in the drawing-room, and Dora engaged in superintending her household arrangements, John came in and sat down in a chair opposite to mine, holding his hands out to warm them by the fire.

' You should take exercise, John,' I said.

' I am going out presently, Harriette, and shall probably be absent all day. I am very provoked that it is so, but at this meeting of the magistrates my presence is considered absolutely necessary.'

' You have nothing that I can see to keep you at home—unless you are expecting any one?'

' No; I am expecting no one.'

' Dora's friend may call, for she tells me that he said something about doing so.'

' But as you are at home, Harriette—'

He was balancing the poker in a would-be careless way as he asked the question.

' Well?'

' There can be no harm in her receiving him.'

' I should hardly, John, think it wise of you to encourage the visits of a young man who has evidently been on the terms *that* young man has been with Dora.'

' What do you mean? What terms, Harriette?'

' You have eyes, John; you saw the meeting as well as I.'

' Harriette,' he exclaimed, getting up, ' if you think I have not the most complete confidence in Dora, you are mistaken.'

' You need not get angry, John, for it was you who suggested I should be at home.'

For a moment John's eyes blazed.

' Dora needs no espionage.'

Dora I trust as completely in my absence as in my presence.'

' Dora will suffer from no espionage on *my* part,' I replied, with dignity; ' for, like you, I shall be absent from home nearly all day.' And, as I said this, I rose and left the room, not wishing that my brother and I should say hard things after so many years of love and confidence. But disguise it as he would, I knew him well enough to see that he was troubled.

I left the house after John did, but I was home before him, and the first thing I saw upon the hall-table was a card with 'Mr. Childers' engraved upon it. I wondered if he had been admitted, if Dora had seen him, and how long he had remained; and I determined to ask. No false pride should keep me from doing my duty.

' So you have had a visitor, Dora?'

' Yes, Mr. Childers has called.'

' An old love?'

Dora crimsoned.

' Hardly that, for we were almost children when we met last; but very intimate, considering we played together every day, and that they lived close by us in the same village. Ah, how well I remember again so many little things which I had forgotten till he reminded me!'

' Pleasant memories?'

' O, yes; of such happy days; and yet now they seem so long ago.'

John had come in unobserved, and he remained quite silent in the shade.

' Is Mr. Childers making a long stay in the neighbourhood?'

' I hardly know yet. He is staying at Woodsleigh; but he has promised to call again.'

' Who?' John asked, coming forward.

' You here!' Dora exclaimed,

starting up, and making room for him, as she spoke, by the fire. 'I did not even hear you come in.'

'Yes, I am back again, after a rather long day's work. And what has my little Dora been doing?'

'She has had a visitor,' I said.

'Who was it, Dora?'

'Mr. Childers.'

My eye involuntarily caught John's.

'I have been out, as you know, and Mr. Childers' visit was well-timed, since Dora might have been dull. Did he stay long with you, Dora?' I said.

'Some time; I don't know how long.'

'When we are amused the time passes quickly; besides, you had old days to talk over, and love's young dream.'

Dora blushed again a deep red, and I saw that John noticed it, notwithstanding that he laughed it off, and chatted about Mr. Childers as if he were his friend, instead of Dora's; and then the bell rang for dinner, and the subject was mentioned no more—at least before me.

The next day being fine, and John at home, we went out for a walk. Dora had recovered from the effects of her fatigue, or rather John considered she had done so, for he watched her every change of expression, and often, I thought, fancied her ill when she was not so.

'I am much stronger than you think,' Dora said, laughing as she danced before us on the hard crystallised snow, her winter dress tucked up over a quilted blue petticoat, her hands snugly concealed in a tiny sable muff, which material also trimmed her black-velvet coat and hat; 'much stronger—am I not, Harriette?'

'I think,' I replied, 'that young people can generally bear a great

deal of fatigue in the pursuit of their own amusements.'

Dora laughed—she was like a child in moments of excitement—and she ran back to John, exclaiming,

'I can bear any fatigue to-day, for, as Harriette says, I want to be amused. Where shall we go?'

Several different walks were proposed, till at last one was decided upon by Dora herself, and we turned in the direction she wished. We had hardly walked a mile when in a bend of the road we came suddenly upon a horseman, and recognised in him the stranger we had met at the ball. I glanced sharply at Dora. Was this premeditated, and done in the careless way it had been to drown suspicion? But her face afforded no clue. In a few moments Mr. Childers had dismounted, was formally introduced by Dora, which he had not been before, and, leading his horse, joined our party. I say *our* party; but we were soon divided, Dora and Mr. Childers walking some way ahead, John and I bringing up the rear. John's face was no longer so bright as when we started, and he seemed disinclined to talk; so we both lapsed into comparative silence—a silence which was broken by the gay young voices in front, and the tread of the horse's feet on the hard ground. Mr. Childers had the reins thrown over his arm, but Dora seemed to occupy his entire attention. Presently the road, which had hitherto been almost level, suddenly rose, and we were climbing a hill.

'I am not so young as I was, John; may I have an arm?'

He smiled as he gave it, and we were soon at the top of the hill. Dora and her companion had paused, and were waiting for us, Dora looking exceedingly

pretty, as her face, flushed with the exercise, had an unusually bright colour. Mr. Childers' arm was now resting on his horse's neck, and standing as they did side by side they formed a pretty group. Certainly Mr. Childers was good looking, dangerously so, I thought, with his bright handsome face and curling brown hair, that contrasted so strongly with John's; and despite his youthfulness—for he did not look more than twenty—he had a certain air of well-bred ease that marked him as a young man who had seen something of the world.

' You are tired, Dora,' my brother said.

' Indeed, I am not.'

' But remember we have yet to return home, and it is over two miles.'

She smiled up at him, but offered no resistance to his wishes, and we all turned homewards. I say all; for Mr. Childers, without any word upon the subject, turned also, and leading his horse kept his place at Dora's side. When we reached the garden-gates he paused, and taking out his watch prepared to say goodbye.

' Won't you come in?' John asked.

' Well, I think not now, for I have a ten miles' ride before dinner. I was on my way to call when I so fortunately met you.'

I just glanced at John. This meeting, then, was premeditated, else why had Dora selected that particular road—a road she knew he must come on his way from Woodsleigh, a place which belonged to Lord Somerville? John's eye met mine, and for a moment he hesitated; but the next, after looking me full in the face as if in defiance of the implied suggestion, he begged Mr. Childers to waive ceremony, remain to dinner,

and ride home in the evening after the moon had risen.

Was John infatuated? I believed so from my heart. I only waited to hear the young man's ready acceptance, see Dora's look of pleasure, and then I went upstairs. John had done this to show me his *trust*, I supposed. My poor deluded brother!

The dinner passed off cheerfully enough. Mr. Childers had a fund of small talk at his command, knew a good many people in the county, and seemed most anxious to make himself agreeable. After dinner the gentlemen did not remain long in the dining-room, and on joining us John asked Dora to sing, a thing he was accustomed to do every evening, and Dora at once complied. She had a pretty voice, neither of much power nor compass, but very sweet, and it was my brother's delight to sit and listen to her in the half-light before the lamps came in, which they always did with the tea a little later. On this evening she turned at once to Mr. Childers.

' Can we not recollect any of our old songs?' she said.

' I hardly know,' he replied; ' perhaps if you played them I might.'

Then her hands rambled over the piano, and presently the two voices came blended together. John and I sat and listened, as song succeeded song, and though I could not see his face I felt as if I could. When the lights and tea appeared Dora left the piano, and took her usual place at my brother's side. Mr. Childers stood in front of the fire, and I resumed my work in silence; indeed, as soon as tea was over I went to bed, or at least to my own room; but it was not till a late hour that I heard the sound of Mr. Childers' horse's feet echo as they

passed my window on his home-ward ride.

The weather continued cold and bright, and Christmas came creeping on. We were all three invited to spend that festive season with Mr. Marchmont at Ivybridge, to meet what was now considered a family party, which was to include several of Dora's young brothers, who were coming up from the West of England for that purpose. My brother had since his marriage, I knew, been interesting himself to get an appointment for the eldest of them, and had more or less succeeded, so that Dora was in high spirits at the idea of meeting them again and telling the news. I had no intention of accepting the invitation, and my brother urging me to do it did not alter my determination. What would all those strange faces be to me? I had far rather be at John's empty hearth, nursing memories of the past years which he and I had spent together, than among those who seemed to have robbed me of all I had lost. Dora was very urgent I should go, and Mr. Marchmont even wrote several times; but a point I had not conceded to my brother it was not likely I should to them. Then they offered to remain at home themselves; but of this I would not hear; and so it happened that on Christmas-eve I was once again a solitary woman, such as I had never expected to be in John's lifetime.

The days passed quietly away, unbroken, indeed, except by a letter now and then either from Dora or John, and some unexpected visitors who called the afternoon before their return. I was standing at my bedroom window, when an open barouche was driven rapidly to the door. Two ladies whom I did not know were

lying back under the head, well wrapped in warm furs, and the front seat was occupied by a young man whom I instantly recognised as Mr. Childers. Some inquiries were made by the servants, cards and a note handed in; the footmen resumed their places, the horses plunged forward, and in another minute they had swept out of sight.

I went down-stairs and took the cards and note in my hand. The note was directed to Dora; the cards were those of Lord and Lady Somerville and Mr. Childers. This was Lady Somerville's first visit at my brother's house, although we had lived in the same neighbourhood for so many years, a circumstance I had hitherto believed to be in consequence of the ten miles which lay between us; and the present honour was no doubt a concession to Mr. Childers, so that the motive at least was far from flattering.

The next day, just before dinner, John and Dora returned. Both were in the highest spirits, full of the late family meeting, and regrets that I had not gone. When we returned to the drawing-room I gave Dora the cards and note. The first she just glanced at, and threw away. But not so the second; for hurriedly breaking the seal, an expression of childlike pleasure came from her lips, and turning to my brother, who was just then coming in, she exclaimed,

'O, is not this charming? We are asked to stay at Woodsleigh for those private theatricals and the ball Mr. Childers was telling us about!'

John looked surprised, and took the note from her hand. He smiled when he had finished reading it, and said, with much gravity,

'Dora, you surely would not

have me so dissipated as to accept *this*? Think of my gray hairs!

Dora shook her own long fair curls back at him, as she laughed a little mocking laugh. My brother put his arm round her and drew her to his side, where she remained for one moment, and then starting back exclaimed,

'I shall accept, now, at once,' and she went into the back drawing-room, where the writing materials were kept.

'John,' I said, 'surely you are not going?'

'Why not?'
'I think you are too old for the frivolities of a country house such as Woodsleigh, and Dora—'

'Well, and Dora?'

'Is too young.'

'What do you mean? Surely if she can ever enjoy life it is now; it *ought* to be now.'

'That depends on what the enjoyment is. Some things are better resisted.'

'What do you mean, Harriette?'

'I mean that at Woodsleigh Dora will be laid open to things hitherto undreamt of—admiration, flattery, *attentions*.'

'And if she is?'

I laughed. My poor infatuated brother!

'John, you are your own master; but remember, should you be disappointed in the *result* of this visit, I warned you.'

'Harriette—' he began, but his words were interrupted by Dora's return.

'Well, at all events,' I thought, 'I have done *my duty*, and John can now act as he pleases.'

It turned out that it pleased John to go, and as the invitation was for the following week we did not settle into our old places, but the establishment generally seemed in a constant bustle of preparation. My brother ordered

a number of new dresses as a pleasant surprise for Dora, of a style and material to which Dora *Marchmont* never could have aspired; and as, under the superintendence of the dressmaker, her maid arrayed her, first in one and then another, she came down and showed herself to John, who was waiting for and watching everything with the greatest interest and admiration, enough to turn any girl's head. At last all was finished, boxes packed, and they had started. The visit was only meant to extend over three days, but at the end of the week they had not returned. When they left The Cedars they were in great spirits, so perhaps, I thought, they are enjoying themselves too much to care about home. However, at the end of ten days they appeared, and the first thing I noticed was a look of depression on John's face.

Dora, on the contrary, was in wild spirits, and full of all the minute details of the gaieties of Woodsleigh. The theatricals had gone off with the greatest *éclat*, and Dora even had been persuaded to take some part in them. Besides the regular ball, there had been dancing every night, rides and drives every day, and various other amusements such as are to be found in a country house. Mr. Childers' name recurred again and again, and from this I gathered that all Dora's enjoyments had been either promoted or shared by him. What had my brother done? He smiled when I put the question.

'I met a good many old friends there, and Lady Somerville is a most agreeable hostess, allowing one to do very much as one pleases.'

'But you are glad to be home again?'

'Yea.'

(To be continued.)

THE UGLIEST STREET IN LONDON.

THERE were so many competitors for the unenviable distinction, that the task of deciding was by no means an easy one. Old Nichol-street in Bethnal Green presented itself with strong recommendations. It would, perhaps, be going too far to assert that its evil reputation came over with William the Conqueror, but there is no doubt that it may claim a remote antiquity. Its oldest habitations have acquired that peculiar hue of dinginess which invariably becomes the complexion of brick-work that has endured its allotted time; and from one end to the other, the street abounds with narrow entrances to obscure courts and alleys, which are blind to the requirements of decency, and deaf and dumb when called on as witnesses to the habits and customs of those who dwell therein. A person desirous of writing a book to be called *Life in our Hulks, Prisons, and Penitentiaries*, might save himself much labour, if, instead of travelling hither and thither in search of the required information, he confined his explorations to the shady neighbourhood in question; for without doubt he might discover there an almost unlimited number of individuals, male and female, who, from their personal experience and observation, could furnish him with all he might require. There are features of Old Nichol-street and its surroundings which, in their way, are unique. As, for instance, within a hundred yards or so of the broad and busy highway of Shoreditch, there is an

open paved court, with six or eight little houses on either side, all of which are occupied by night-time prowlers, who lurk in the adjacent streets and main thoroughfares, and beguile men in the silly stage of tipsiness home to their dens to rob them. So well is the character of their lodgers known to those who own these abominable tenements, that they will not trust one even for so long as a week. The rooms of each house are let separate at the rate of ninepence a day, and every morning the collector comes and insists on the 'rent.' If he does not succeed in obtaining it, no further risk is incurred, but the lodger is summarily ejected. It is marvellous how such a condition of affairs, being known, can be permitted by the authorities. It is some months since I made the discovery; but, judging from the length of time the abomination had been permitted, there is no great hope that it is now abolished. The police were well aware of it, or, if they were not, undoubtedly they should have been, since I was taken there, and told all about it, by a well-known clergyman of the district.

But, after all, Old Nichol-street is not wholly ugly. In the midst of so much that is in the last degree vile, many honest weavers still toil at their looms for a living, and there are whole colonies of lucifer match-box makers there, with a good sprinkling of those useful members of society, costermongers, who, though not uncommonly classed by ignorant

persons with 'roughs' and thieves, are, as a rule, thoroughly hard-working, and as honest, perhaps, as the nature of their calling will permit them to be. With these redeeming features, therefore, it was impossible to stigmatise Old Nichol-street as the 'ugliest.'

Again. Certain thoroughfares in the neighbourhood of Ratcliff Highway bid promisingly for pre-eminence. And without doubt they were able to put forward claims of an exceptionally repulsive sort. Here may be discovered by dozens and scores, and 'all of a row,' the lurking places of the long-shore shark—everlastingly roaming about seeking whom he may devour, but with an undisguised predilection for sailor's flesh—together with the host of hideous petticoated creatures who pick the bones of the maritime prey brought home by the male hunters. It was not because of the abolition of Tiger Bay, the haunt of the opium-smoker and the hiding-place of the cut-throat Malay, when the police are after him, that Ratcliff Highway proved ineligible for the first prize. There are places still existing in this quarter—despite the operation of the Artisans' Dwellings Act and the requirements of the East London Railway—which, in many respects, are in no way inferior to that terrible 'Bay' in which unlucky Jack ashore so long suffered wreck and ruin as dire as any of his brethren who, in the old times, were wont to be lured to rocky coasts by false lights and treacherous beacons. But, as with Old Nichol-street, the vile population was strangely mixed with much that was passably good—dock labourers, sugar bakers, water-side labourers, &c., honest folk, though rough, the majority of them. Golden-lane, St. Luke's, came in for consider-

ation, as did Peter-street, Westminster, and some three or four streets in the delectable neighbourhood of Seven Dials, and one or two within hail of the Sessions House on Clerkenwell Green. But after anxious inquiry I felt that I could not do other than award the palm to Lint-street in the Borough. To be seen to perfection, Lint-street must be explored at night-time, when the 'birds of a feather' who take flight in the morning return home to roost. In the daytime, however, one has a better opportunity of studying the domestic economy of that essentially 'slummy' locality. Almost from one end to the other, and on both sides of the way, Lint-street is made up of lodging-houses. It may be as well to mention here, for the information of the reader, who can know nothing about such shocking abodes of humanity, that so-called common lodging-houses are not all of a class. There are common, commoner, and commonest. The first mentioned are well-conducted places enough; the lodgers themselves being, as a rule, of the hard-working honest order, who have no 'home' of their own, and are unable to bear the expense of a bedroom and sitting-room in a private house. A common lodging-house of the better sort is, indeed, nothing else than a particularly plain and economical club-house, where, for the sum of about half-a-crown a week, a man or woman may find warm shelter after work-hours, with rough-and-ready facilities for cooking their food, washing their clothes, &c., and sleeping. But the orderly element prevailing, there is seldom any necessity for the police to exercise to the full the authority they are invested with over such places, according to the terms on which

a common lodging-house license is granted.

The commoner kind of lodging-house is that where sticklers for strict respectability are not earnestly invited to come in. These may be regarded as a kind of half-way houses between decent poverty and downright depravity; the latter being represented by the lodging-house of the Lint-street type. For half a century has Lint-street been notorious as the nightly haunt of the scum and dregs of southern London, and there appears but small prospect of its fame diminishing. There can be no question of the peculiar trade to which it is devoted having increased of late years. Metropolitan improvements provide that it should be so. By destroying a rookery you do not annihilate the rooks; you merely drive them away to form new colonies or augment old ones. A raid is made on Old Pye-street, Westminster, or on the draggle-tail skirts of the parish of Bloomsbury; slums and courts and alleys are demolished left and right, and the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood rejoice that they are at last delivered from the plague that had so long vexed them: but others are the worse for the exodus. The objectionable ones, with their wives and families, do not remain without a lodging one single night; and of all things this is certain—that they will ‘camp down’ anew in a body, and in company with their own kind. As for the latter, so warm is their sympathy and so elastic their ideas of ‘room enough,’ that, the law allotting them space sufficient to ‘swing a cat’ in, they will make the cat a newly-born kitten and swing it with a short arm, so that the authorities may be obeyed and a friend in distress at the same time obliged.

Nor is it easy to see a way out of a difficulty which daily is growing more formidable, inasmuch as the incorrigible alley-skulker increases and multiplies like the rest of his species, and not a month passes but sees some curtailment in the only places where he seems capable of living. It may be—as in the case of the horse-stealer, who put it to the judge that he ‘must live’—that we ‘really do not see the necessity;’ but it will in that case be necessary to make persistent vagabondism a capital offence.

It is because Lint-street in the Borough seems to be so completely given over to this kind of population, that it is entitled to be styled the ugliest street in London. In the daytime, except for the principals and head-servants of the various establishments getting drunk at the public-houses, which of course abound in such a neighbourhood, the long crooked thoroughfare is not remarkable for noise or disorder. Judging from the condition of the dilapidated old houses, and the number of ‘lodgers’ they are nightly made to accommodate—lodgers who come from all parts, and who are as strange to cleanliness as to godliness—it might be imagined that sickness would be rife in Lint-street, and that the dingy windows festooned with a ragged coloured blind, which are dormitory windows, would, when the hale and hearty lodgers had set out on their daily business, show many a nightcapped head and pallid visage of disease or fever-stricken ones, who for the time were ‘laid by.’ But a wise provision of the common lodging-house Act provides against this. More, perhaps, for the prevention of the spread of contagion than for the patient’s sake, it is ordered that no person may remain sick at

any lodging-house for more than twenty-four hours. Whatever may be their malady, if they still remain invalid after that time, the workhouse authorities are communicated with, and the objectionable person carried away. Nor is it likely that the owner of a lodging-house would make any demur to such an arrangement, since he is well aware that with his class of customers it is never anything better than 'from hand to mouth,' and if a man cannot get about to pick up his living there is small chance of his landlord getting his rent. It would not be the dread of contagion alone that would prevent poor fever-stricken wretches being permitted to lie with the healthy. And before I can quote a case in point, I must amend the statement already made that the lodging-house of the Lint-street kind is the commonest of all. There is still a more dismal depth to which human beings may descend. I cannot say if they may be found in any other part of the metropolis; but in the vicinity of Golden-lane, St. Luke's, are, or until recently were, to be found what are known as 'hot-water houses' or cooking-shops. The owners of these places do not pretend to take in lodgers, but for a penny or so a day applicants are permitted to shelter there, and use the cooking utensils. Sometimes, however,—under the plea, if it came to police-questioning, that they were the house-owner's personal friends,—they stayed all night, lying in rows on the floors of the rooms with their arms under their heads for a pillow. Mr. William Orsman, the well-known missionary of the district, on one occasion was in the dead of night sent for to administer dying consolation to a sick child at one of these awful places; and there he found the poor little creature, a

girl of six or eight years old, in the mortal stage of scarlet-fever, lying on the ground with fifteen other lodgers, adult and juvenile, and who doubtless went their way next morning with their rags laden with the deadly contagion, sowing it broadcast.

As already stated, however, as far as is possible provision is made against such imminent risk in Lint-street. Indeed, to judge from the special feature which is made in the announcements of the lodging-house keepers, there is amongst them a disposition towards cleanliness beyond what might be expected. To be sure, much cannot be expected 'at the price,' which is fixed at that of the poor man's pot of beer—fourpence being the almost invariable charge. For this small sum, paid in advance to the 'deputy' who sits in his hutch within the doorway, a lodger may command the establishment to the extent of its means. There may possibly be—nay, there is no use in mincing the matter, there are a few outsiders in the lodging-house line in Lint-street, who are unprincipled enough to endeavour to draw to their establishments an unfair share of business by reducing the sum to threepence; boldly putting out handbills to the effect that at that reduced tariff 'every comfort of home' is obtainable, 'including the use of the frying-pan or gridiron, and the shoe-brushes in the morning for such as come provided with blacking.' Small matters make up the sum-total of the mighty world. The 'use of the shoe-brushes' may, at first sight, appear an insignificant item, and one not very likely to affect such tatterdemalions who seek Lint-street housing, but the smallest consideration will show that there are a large number who would appreciate the

boon at its value. The 'clean though poor' cadger of the out-of-work-mechanic style of get-up would not overlook such a manifest advantage; neither would the dejected broken-down clerk, who, dumb-stricken in despair, stands in the same suit of threadbare black as he wore when it was his daily custom to mount an office-stool, the same well-brushed but shockingly bad hat, the same spotless cuffs and shirt-front. Nay, in order that there may be no possibility of mistake as to what was his respectable avocation before penury, coming along at ever so many knots an hour, overtook him, and swept him with simoom velocity out of house and home and situation, he still carries his office-pen behind his ear. He mutely submits to the public, as he stands meekly on the edge of the pavement, half a quire of soiled note-paper, a stick of sealing-wax, and two or three lead-pencils; but he has no idea of parting with these precious goods. Indeed, should a person show himself to be so outrageously hard-hearted as to require a pen'orth for his penny, the poor clerk, in a tremulous voice, will admit that the pencils are very poor ones, and he is afraid, kind gentleman, not worth carrying away. But, benevolent reader, waste not a sigh on this most melancholy of beggars. He is not always thus cast down. His business is a good one; and after his day's work is done, he may any night be found, in an easy jacket and smoking-cap, 'in the chair' at the 'sing-song' held at the Flinder and Parasite, where he is regarded as one of the merriest old souls in creation.

To return, however, to Lintstreet. It is night-time there. Now that the days are shortening, the birds return earlier to roost.

With the setting in of twilight, the narrow street becomes more and more alive. They do not come boldly trooping home, these cadgers and tramps, and persons who can give no more definite account of themselves than that they 'pick up' a living; that would be doing violence to their nature. They come sneaking in by every available side-way and back-way; so that, as unexpectedly as though they had arrived there up the sink-holes, you find them swarming on every side of you. They bring, excepting their professional rags, no evidence of poverty along with them. The chandler's shops in the neighbourhood do a thriving trade: prime rashers off the gammon, with plenty of fresh eggs, being in great demand, not to mention the best of butter and the newest of bread and the primest of old Cheshire cheese. They are dainty, these brazen-faced trespassers and poachers on the domains of benevolence.

'It is all very well to call a fellow an idle beggar,' once said to me an old gentleman who for upwards of forty years had followed begging as a profession; 'but I should just like them as can see nothing but laziness in it to take a turn at it and convince themselves. I don't mean for once in a way; but to go regularly to work at it, in a manner of speaking, as I do.' (He was attached to the street-chanting branch of the business.) 'Up one street and down another, with your feet splashing in the mud, and the perishing cold wind finding its way in at every hole in your coat and trousers; creeping along in the middle of the road from, say, ten in the morning till four or five in the afternoon, and perhaps in a neighbourhood where it isn't safe to put up for an hour and get a comfortable glass of something

the whole time. Why, it's a precious sight harder work than being a bricklayer's labourer, for all the fuss that is made about it.'

'And it pays a great deal better,' I remarked.

'Well, of course it do,' was the old rascal's ingenuous reply; 'else you wouldn't find so many being such jolly fools as to work at it.'

The common lodging-house kitchen is the only 'sitting-room' provided for the lodgers, no matter their number, age, or sex. Gray old grandfathers and grandmothers, matronly women with their half-dozen little children, hulking ruffians of the Sikes breed, bouncing brawny-armed damsels, lithe-limbed nimble young prigs—all are accommodated as one happy family. The furniture of the kitchen is neither elaborate nor costly. Only that it is shockingly dirty instead of scrupulously clean, it has something of the aspect of a barrack dining-room, with its long length of deal tables and its forms to match. The only other accommodation is an enormous 'locker,' a sort of cupboard fitted with pigeon-holes and made fast with a strong lock, of which the 'deputy' of the house commands the key. It is thoroughly understood, indeed none but a 'greenhorn' would dream of raising the question, that whenever a Lint-street lodger sees, or can contrive, an opportunity for appropriating his neighbour's goods, he does so without the slightest compunction. He will not even keep his itching fingers off the bedclothing of the establishment, and it is quite a common practice for the proprietors to have their sheets and rugs stamped, in letters as broad as the palm: 'Stop thief!' or 'Stop him! This was stole from Flannigan's!' The lodging-house keeper is not responsible for a lodger's goods.

You may leave what you think fit with the 'deputy' before you go up to bed,—your boots, your cap, your coat, any portable property you may happen to have in your possession,—and you may rely on having them safely taken care of, and returned to you the following morning. With the above precautions taken, and with the remainder of his attire made into a neat bundle and laid pillow-wise under a lodger's head, he may close his eyes with some sense of security.

But the most remarkable feature of the Lint-street houses is the enormous fire that is kept burning summer and winter. Passing down the street at night-time, when the street-doors are open, the capacious kitchen may be seen at the end of the gloomy passage, glowing ruddy in the firelight, and adding not a little to the rufianly aspect of the questionable characters clustered about it. But the best time for taking a peep at a Lint-street kitchen is when the earliest arrivals (and they, as a rule, are those whose circumstances are easy, inasmuch as they do not feel compelled to 'work' after early evening) come home, bringing with them their supper to be cooked. With thirty or forty lodgers trooping in in the space of half an hour, and each one sharp-set for his evening meal, and with only one fire available for the cooking purposes, it may be easily imagined that the grate which contains it must be a capacious one—not unfrequently it extends to a length of five or six feet, with a breadth corresponding. Those, however, who have suppers to prepare are not fastidious. There is but one great frying-pan, and in this are deposited at one time chops, steaks, kidneys, rashers of bacon, and sausages; the result of this promiscuous mingling of

meats being found to give a pleasant pungency to the gravy, which is fairly divided according to each depositor's substantial contribution. It is a stirring spectacle, when the cooking is at its height, to contemplate the tattered, dirty-faced, hungry mob, each with a plate hugged to his breast, and a knife in his hand, keeping a vigilant eye on his particular morsel frizzling in the pan, lest some larcenous fork should be presently stuck in it for its covert abstraction. On account of a frequent indulgence in this playful practice, it is deemed prudent to constitute the kitchen 'helper' master of the cooking ceremonies. This functionary is commonly possessed of muscular qualifications equal to the settlement of any serious disagreement that may take place between two or more lodgers; and moreover, as custodian of the frying-pan, he is armed with an iron-spit, long and strong enough to impale an offender; but it is as much as he can do to maintain order amongst his clients until he is prepared faithfully to render each man his own. The difficulty arises from the process of cooking altering the complexion of the pieces of meat in the pan, and affecting the question of identity. The knowing birds of the dingy brood, however, are equal to the emergency. 'That's mine with the notch cut in the fat!' 'That's mine with the cross on it!' 'Drop that now, Larry! Yours is a little bit, and I can swear to mine from its having a pin stuck in it!' But after all there is more of horse-play than hot blood and bad temper displayed, and in a short time no

other sound is heard but the clatter of steel against earthenware, and the champing of voracious jaws.

It is not until the general supper has been disposed of that what may be called the tag-rag and bobtail make their appearance — the street-singers and players on musical instruments, the crossing-sweepers, the penny-paper hawkers, the cigar-light sellers, and the *bond-fide* 'tramps,' bound on a long journey and making this their halting-place for the night. It is not until ten or eleven o'clock, when the kitchen is full and the outer door is closed, that the fun begins: the song-singing, the story-telling, and the ordinary enjoyments of a common lodging-house fireside. No doubt all that can be done is done to keep such a dangerous assemblage in something like order, but to make them observe decency and decorum is simply impossible. This is terribly bad for the young folk, for the mere boys and girls who accompany their parents. As for the grown-up ruffianism, it is already as bad as bad can be, and no amount of evil steeping can increase the intensity of its in-grain dye; but for the children it is shocking. And by and by, the sexes dividing, the merry crews troop off to bed—the little boys with the grown men, and the little girls with the grown women; and in the dormitories the pretty stories begun in the kitchen will be completed, until, all of them worn out with uproarious laughter and wicked mirth, snoring takes the place of tale-telling; and Lint-street, the ugliest of the ugly, is asleep.

THE HOPEFUL PARTING.

FAITH and courage live in trial,
Hope is strong as it is crossed,
Patience conquers long denial,
Love still loves when it has lost.
Ever the steadfast soul—defiant
Of the adverse might of things—
Rises up supreme, reliant,
Smiting ether with her wings.

Not in fortune nor in season
Doth it lie to bring dismay,
When the heart sustained by reason
Out of night compels the day.
Not a parting though in sorrow,
Not a threatening of the main,
Shall prevent the long glad morrow—
Love and I shall meet again.

With strong prayers that take fruition
Lingers thus the tearless bride ;
Though she strains her constant vision
O'er the troubled lengthening tide,
Till she peers beyond the glory
Of the ocean like a seer,
And her heart has read the story
Of all *he* will do and dare.

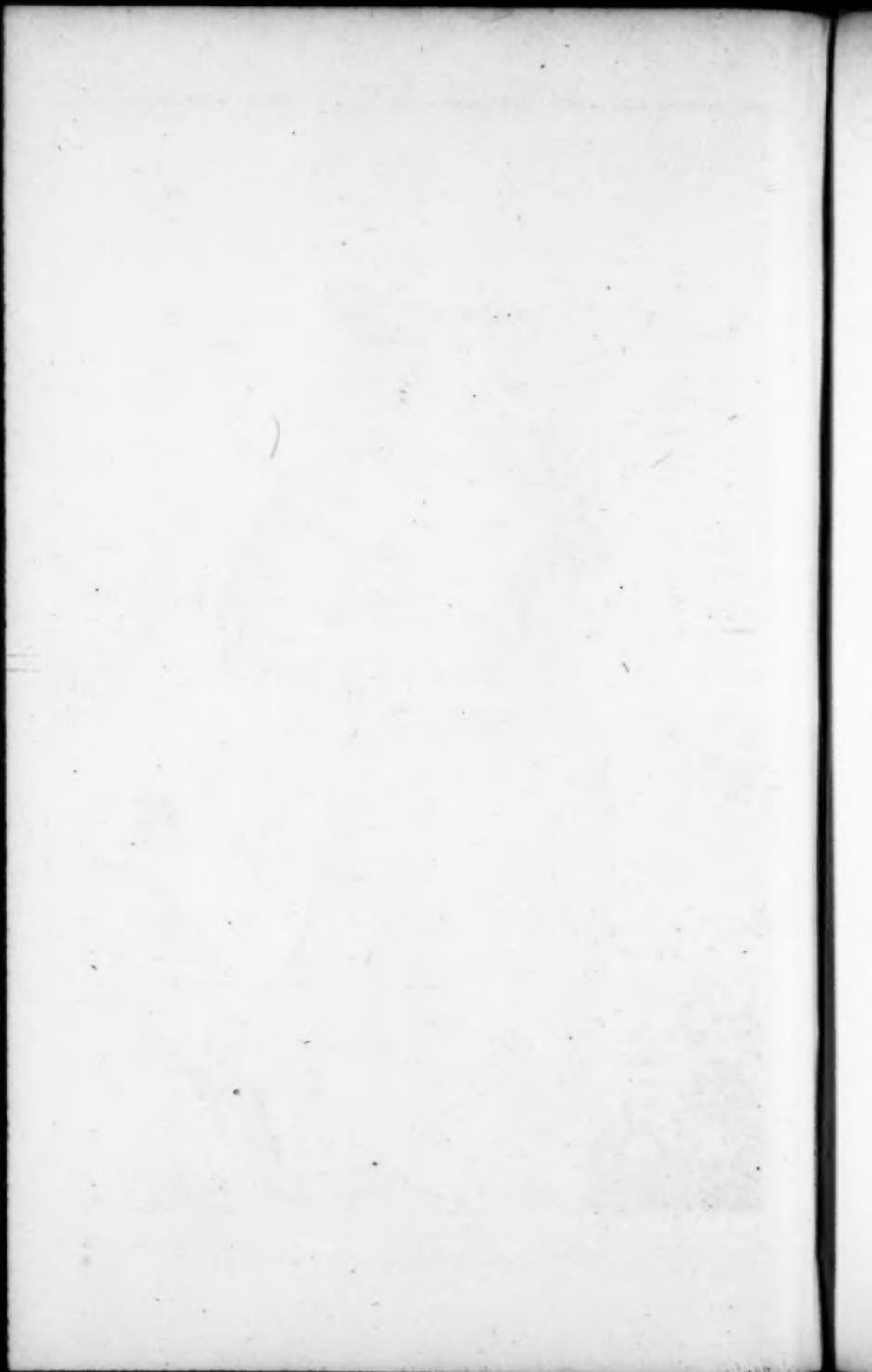
Autumn winds that loose her tresses,
And light errant flecks of foam,
Seem but shadowy caresses
Borne from his far floating home.
Present sad to future golden
Turns, for Time hath naught to prove ;
For she *knows* his hand is holden,
Save for honour, her, and love !

A. H. G.



THE HOPEFUL PARTING,

[See the Verse.]



THE WINE OF SOCIETY.

STRONG men, we know, lived before Agamemnon ; and strong wine was made in the fair province of Champagne long before the days of the sagacious Dom Perignon, to whom we are indebted for the sparkling vintage known under the now familiar name. The chalky slopes that border the Marne were early recognised as offering special advantages for the culture of the vine. The priests and monks, whose vows of sobriety certainly did not lessen their appreciation of the good things of this life, and the produce of whose vineyards usually enjoyed a higher reputation than those of their lay neighbours, were clever enough to seize upon the most eligible sites, and quick to spread abroad the fame of their wines. St. Remi, baptiser of Clovis, the first Christian king in France, at the end of the fifth century left by will, to various churches, the vineyards which he owned at Rheims and Laon, together with the 'villains' employed in their cultivation. Some three and a half centuries later we find worthy Bishop Pardulus of Laon imitating Paul's advice to Timothy, and urging Archbishop Hincmar to drink of the wines of Epernay and Rheims for his stomach's sake. The crusade-preaching Pope, Urban II., who was born among the vineyards of the Champagne, dearly loved the wine of Ay ; and his energetic appeals to the princes of Europe to take up arms for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre may have owed some of their eloquence to his favourite beverage.

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The red wine of the Champagne sparkled on the boards of monarchs of the Middle Ages when they sat at meat amidst their mailclad chivalry, and quaffed mighty beakers to the confusion of the Paynim. Henry of Andely has sung in his *fabliau* of the 'Bataille des Vins,' how, when stout Philip Augustus and his chaplain constituted themselves the earliest known wine-jury, the *crûs* of Epernay, Auviler, Châlons, and Reims were amongst those which found most favour in their eyes, though nearly a couple of centuries elapsed before Eustace Deschamps recorded in verse the rival merits of those of Cumières and Ay. King Wenceslaus of Bohemia, a mighty toper, got so royally drunk day after day upon the vintages of the Champagne, that he forgot all about the treaty with Charles VI., that had formed the pretext of his visit to France, and would probably have lingered, goblet in hand, in the old cathedral city till the day of his death, but for the presentation of a little account for wine consumed, which sobered him to repentance and led to his abrupt departure. Dunois, Lahire, Xaintrailles, and their fellows, when they rode with Joan of Arc to the coronation of Charles VII., drank the same generous fluid, through helmets barred, to the speedy expulsion of the detested English from the soil of France.

The *vin d'Ay, vinum Dei* as Dominicus Baudoine punningly styled it, was, according to old Paulmier, the ordinary drink of the kings and princes of his day.

It fostered bluff King Hal's fits of passion and the tenth Leo's artistic extravagance; consoled Francis I. for the field of Pavia, and solaced his great rival in his retirement at St. Just. Henri Quatre, whose *vendangeoir* is still shown at Ay, was so fond of it, that he was wont to style himself the Seigneur d'Ay, just as James of Scotland was known as the Gudeman of Ballangeich. When his son, Louis XIII., was crowned, the wines of Champagne were the only growths allowed to grace the board at the royal banquet. Freely too did they flow at the coronation feast of the Grand Monarque, when the crowd of assembled courtiers, who quaffed them in his honour, hailed them as the finest wines of the day.

But the wines which drew forth all these encomiums were far from resembling the champagne of modern times. They were not, as has been asserted, all as red as burgundy and as flat as port; for at the close of the sixteenth century some of them were of a *fauve* or yellowish hue, and of the intermediate tint between red and white which the French call *clairet*, and which our old writers translate as the 'complexion of a cherry' or the 'colour of a partridge's eye.' But, as a rule, the wines of the Champagne up to this period closely resembled those produced in the adjacent province, where Charles the Bold had once held sway; a resemblance, no doubt, having much to do with the great medical controversy regarding their respective merits which arose in 1652. In that year a young medical student, hard pressed for the subject of his inaugural thesis, and in the firm faith that

'None but a clever dialectician
Can hope to become a good physician,
And that logic plays an important part
In the mystery of the healing art,'

propounded the theory that the wines of Burgundy were preferable to those of Champagne, and that the latter were irritating to the nerves and conducive to gout. The faculty of medicine at Rheims naturally rose in arms at this insolent assertion. They seized their pens and poured forth a deluge of French and Latin in defence of the wines of their province, eulogising alike their purity, their brilliancy of colour, their exquisite flavour and perfume, their great keeping powers, and, in a word, their general superiority to the Burgundy growths. The partisans of the latter were equally prompt in rallying in their defence, and the faculty of medicine of Beaune, having put their learned periwigs together, enunciated their views and handled their opponents without mercy. The dispute spread to the entire medical profession, and the champions went on peltting each other with pamphlets in prose and tractates in verse, until in 1778—long after the bones of the original disputants were dust and their lancets rust—the faculty of Paris, to whom the matter was referred, gave a final and formal decision in favour of the wines of Champagne.

Meanwhile an entirely new kind of wine, which was to carry the name of the province producing it to the uttermost corners of the earth, had been introduced. On the picturesque slopes of the Marne, about nine miles from Rheims, stands the little hamlet of Hautvillers, which, in pre-revolutionary days, was a mere dependency upon a spacious abbey dedicated to St. Peter. Here the worthy monks of the order of St. Benedict had lived in peace and prosperity for several hundred years, carefully cultivating the acres of vineland extending around

the abbey, and religiously exacting a tithe of all the other wine pressed in their district. The revenue of the community thus depending in no small degree upon the vintage, it was natural that the post of 'celerer' should be one of importance. It happened that about the year 1668 this office was conferred upon a worthy monk named Perignon. Poets and roasters, we know, are born, and not made; and this precursor of the Moëts and Clicquot, the Heidsiecks and the Mumms of our day, seems to have been a heaven-born cellarman, with a strong head and a discriminating palate. The wine exacted from the neighbouring cultivators was of all qualities—good, bad, and indifferent; and with the spirit of a true Benedictine, Dom Perignon hit upon the idea of 'marrying' the produce of one vineyard with that of another. He had noted that one kind of soil imparted fragrance and another generosity, and discovered that a white wine could be made from the blackest grapes, which would keep good, instead of turning yellow and degenerating like the wine obtained from white ones. Moreover, the happy thought occurred to him that a piece of cork was a much more suitable stopper for a bottle than the flax dipped in oil, which had heretofore served that purpose.

The white or, as it was sometimes styled, the gray wine of Champagne grew famous, and the manufacture spread throughout the province, but that of Hautvillers held the predominance. The celerer, ever busy among his vats and presses, barrels and bottles, alighted upon a discovery destined to be far more important in its results. He found out the way of making an effervescent wine—a wine that burst out of

the bottle and overflowed the glass, that was twice as dainty to the taste, and twice as exhilarating in its effects. It was at the close of the seventeenth century that this discovery was made—when the glory of the Roi Soleil was on the wane, and with it the splendour of the Court of Versailles. The king, for whose especial benefit liqueurs had been invented, found a gleam of his youthful energy as he sipped the creamy foaming vintage that enlivened his dreary *tête-à-tête* with the widow of Scarron. It found its chief patrons, however, amongst the bands of gay young roysterers, the future *roués* of the Regency, whom the Duc d'Orléans and the Duc de Vendôme had gathered round them at the Palais Royal and at Anet. It was at one of the famous *soupers* d'Anet that the Marquis de Sillery—who had turned his sword into a pruning-knife, and applied himself to the cultivation of his paternal vineyards on the principles inculcated by the celerer of St. Peter's—first introduced the wine bearing his name. The flower-wreathed bottles, which, at a given signal, a dozen of blooming young damsels scantily draped in the guise of Bacchanals placed upon the table, were hailed with rapture, and thenceforth sparkling wine was an indispensable adjunct at all the *petits soupers* of the period. In the highest circles the popping of champagne-corks seemed to ring the knell of sadness, and the victories of Marlborough were in a measure compensated for by this grand discovery.

Why the wine foamed and sparkled was a mystery even to the very makers themselves; for as yet Baume's aerometer was unknown, and the connection between sugar and carbonic acid undreamt of. The general belief

was that the degree of effervescence depended upon the time of year at which the wine was bottled, and that the rising of the sap in the vine had everything to do with it. Certain wiseacres held that it was influenced by the age of the moon at the time of bottling; whilst others thought the effervescence could best be secured by the addition of spirit, alum, and other nastinesses. It was this belief in the use and efficacy of drugs that led to a temporary reaction against the wine about 1715, in which year Dom Perignon departed this life. In his latter days he had grown blind, but his discriminating taste enabled him to discharge his duties with unabated efficiency to the end. Many of the tall tapering glasses invented by him have been emptied to the memory of the old Benedictine, whose tomb may yet be seen in the principal aisle of the archaic abbey-church of Hautvillers.

Dom Perignon found worthy successors, and thenceforward the manufacture and the popularity of champagne went on steadily increasing, until to-day its production is carried on upon a scale and with an amount of painstaking care that would astonish its originator. For good champagne does not rain down from the clouds or gush out from the rocks, but is the result of incessant labour, patient skill, minute precaution, and careful observation. In the first place, the soil imparts to the natural wine a special quality which it has been found impossible to imitate in any other quarter of the globe. To the wine of Ay it lends a flavour of peaches, and to that of Avenay the savour of strawberries; the vintage of Hautvillers, though fallen from its former high estate, is yet marked by an unmistakable nutty taste;

while that of Pierry smacks of the locally-abounding flint, the well-known *pierre à fusil* flavour. So on the principle that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, the produce of grapes grown in the more favoured vineyards is added in certain proportions to secure certain special characteristics, as well as to maintain a fixed standard of excellence.

Of the vintaging in the ordinary sense of the word, it is hardly necessary to speak, since the manufacture of champagne commences where that of other wines ordinarily ends. It will be sufficient to state that both black and white grapes are used; the latter, however, only in a small proportion. On consideration it will be seen it is no more phenomenal that a white wine should be made from black grapes than that a black hen should lay white eggs. To keep the raw wine nearly colourless, it is simply requisite, first, to avoid bruising the skins of the grapes during their transit to the wine-press, in order that the colouring matter which they contain shall not be set loose; and next, not to permit the wine to ferment upon the skins in the vat. The grapes, which are picked with great care, so as to secure a minimum of stalk with a maximum of berry, all rotten and withered fruit being thrown aside, are pressed without any previous treading, and the pale reddish tinge which the new wine has usually disappears after fermentation. With it, however, there too often departs the amount of tannin requisite to preserve the wine from certain diseases, notably the formation of viscous fibres. Doctors skilled in vinification attribute the disease to want of tone in the patient's system, and prescribe a strengthening course of oak-galls or catechu, or, better still, of an extract from the skins

and pips of the grapes, which is usually added as a precautionary measure to the wine in bulk. After pressure the must is allowed to clear itself in the vat, and is then drawn off into casks holding some forty-four gallons each. In due course it is racked and fined, *secundum artem*, usually in the following January.

At the close of the vintage hundreds of carts laden with casks of newly-made wine are to be seen rolling along the dusty highways, leading to those towns and villages in the Marne where the manufacture of champagne is carried on. Chief amongst these is the cathedral city of Rheims, after which comes the rising town of Epernay, stretching to the very verge of the river, and where those magnates of the champagne trade, Moët & Chandon, whose famous 'star' brand is familiar in every part of the civilised globe, have their half-score miles of cellars containing as many million bottles of champagne as there are millions of inhabitants in most of the secondary European states. No better idea can be given of the various processes through which the famed effervescent beverage passes after leaving the wine-press, until the bottles in their perfect adorments are ready for being despatched, than by following these processes, one by one, in the vast establishment belonging to this well-known firm, which already counts a century of existence, and far surpasses all other champagne houses in the magnitude of its transactions.

Messrs. Moët & Chandon have their head-quarters in a spacious château in that street of châteaux known as the Faubourg de la Folie at Epernay. It is approached through handsome iron gates, and has beautiful gardens extending in the rear in the direction of the river

Marne. The business of blending and bottling the wine is carried on opposite in a range of comparatively new buildings, the white façade of which is ornamented with the well-known monogram, M. & C., surmounted by the familiar star. Passing through the arched gateway, access is obtained into a spacious courtyard, where carts laden with bottles are being expeditiously lightened of their fragile contents by the busy hands of numerous workmen. Another gateway on the left leads into the spacious bottle-washing room, which from the middle of May until the middle of July presents a scene of extraordinary animation. Bottle-washing apparatuses are ranged down the entire length of this hall, and some 150 women strive to excell each other in diligence and celerity in their management. As a rule, a practised hand will wash from 900 to 1000 bottles in course of the day. To the right of this *salle de rinçage*, as it is styled, bottles are stacked in their tens of thousands, and lads furnished with barrows, known as *diables*, hurry to and fro, conveying these fragile receptacles to the washers, or removing the clean ones to the adjacent courtyard, where they are allowed to drain, before being taken to the *salle de tirage* or bottling room. A steam-engine supplies the bottle-washing machine with water to the amount of 20,000 gallons per diem.

Before, however, the washing of bottles on this gigantic scale commences, the wine with which they are destined to be filled undergoes the 'marrying' or blending process, which is accomplished in a vast apartment, 250 feet in length and 100 feet broad, during the early spring. The casks of newly-vintaged wine have been stowed away during the winter

months, in the extensive range of cellars hewn out of the chalk underlying Epernay, and have there slowly fermented. At the proper epoch, these are mixed together in due proportions in huge vats, each holding upwards of 12,000 gallons. Some of the wine is the growth of Messrs. Moët & Chandon's own vineyards, of which they possess nearly 1000 acres, giving constant employment to 800 labourers and vine-dressers, at Ay, Pierry, Cramant, Le Mesnil, Verzenay, Bouzy, Saran, Moussy, St. Martin, Dizy-Champignon, Avenay, Grauves, and Hautvillers, their vineyard at the last-named spot including all that remains of the ancient abbatial structure, which was the cradle, so to speak, of champagne. The yield from these vineyards is, however, utterly inadequate to the enormous demand which the Epernay firm are annually called upon to supply, and immense purchases have to be made by their agents from the growers throughout the Champagne. All the wine secured is duly mixed together in proportions which will insure lightness with the requisite vinosity, and fragrance combined with effervescence. This process of marrying wine on a gigantic scale is known as making the *cuvée*, and each great firm has its own especial tradition for the different proportions to be observed in the blending. Usually four-fifths of wine from black grapes, to which the more solid vinous qualities of the blend are due, are tempered by one-fifth of the juice of white grapes, which have the merit of imparting lightness and effervescence. Among the wine from black grapes, it is necessary that there should be a more or less powerful dash of the vintages of Ay, Bouzy, and Verzenay; while of the white, the delicate growths of

Cramant or Avize are essential to a perfect *cuvée*, which is thoroughly amalgamated by stirring up the wine with long poles provided with fan-shaped ends. If the vintage be indifferent in quality, there are scores of huge tuns filled with the yield of more favoured seasons to supply any deficiencies of character and flavour.

These, however, are not the only matters to be considered. There is, above everything, the effervescence, which depends upon the amount of carbonic-acid gas the wine contains, and this, in turn, upon the amount of its saccharine matter. If the gas be present in excess, there will be a shattering of bottles and a flooding of cellars; and if it be absent, the corks will refuse to pop, and the wine to sparkle aright in the glass. Therefore the amount of saccharine in the *cuvée* has to be accurately ascertained by means of a glucometer; and if it fails to reach the required standard, the deficiency is made up by the addition of the purest sugar-candy. If, on the other hand, there be an excess of saccharine, the only thing to be done is to defer the final blending and bottling until the superfluous saccharine matter has been absorbed by fermentation in the cask.

The casks of wine to be blended are raised from the cellars, half a dozen at a time, by means of a lift provided with an endless chain, and worked by the steam-engine already mentioned. They are emptied, through traps in the floor of the room above, into the huge vats which, standing upon a raised platform, reach almost to the ceiling. From these vats the fluid, now resembling in taste and colour an ordinary acrid white wine, and giving to the uninitiated palate no promise of the exquisite delicacy and aroma it is destined to develop,

is allowed to flow through leather hose into rows of casks stationed below. Before being bottled the wine reposes for a certain time, is next duly racked and again blended, and is eventually conveyed through silver-plated pipes into oblong reservoirs, each fitted with a dozen syphon-taps, so arranged that directly the bottle slipped on to one of them becomes full the wine ceases to flow.

The scriptural advice as to not putting new wine into old bottles is most rigorously followed out with regard to champagne. For the tremendous pressure of the gas engendered during the process of fermentation is such that the bottle becomes weakened and can never be safely trusted again. Only the very best and strongest glass ought to be used in their manufacture. A glass-works, established for the production of glass by a new process, turned out bottles charged with alkaline sulphurets, and the consequence was that a whole *cuvée* was ruined by their use, through the reciprocal action of the wine and these sulphurets. The acids of the former disengaged hydro-sulphuric acid, and instead of champagne the result was a new species of mineral water.

Upwards of 200 work-people are employed in the *salle de tirage* at Messrs. Moët & Chandon's, which, while the operation of bottling is going on, presents a scene of bewildering activity. Men and lads are gathered round the syphon-taps briskly removing the bottles as they become filled and supplanting them by empty ones. Other lads hasten to transport the filled bottles on trucks to the corkers, whose so-called 'guillotine' machines are incessantly in motion. The bottles are passed as fast as they are corked to the *agrafeurs*, who secure the corks

with an iron fastening termed an *agrafe*. They are then placed in large flat baskets called *manettes*, and wheeled away on trucks, the quart-bottles being deposited in the cellars by means of lifts, while the pints slide down an inclined plane by the aid of an endless chain, which raises the trucks with the empty baskets at the same time the full ones make their descent into the cellars. What with the incessant thud of the corking machines, the continual rolling of iron-wheeled trucks over the concrete floor, the rattling and creaking of the machinery working the lifts, the occasional sharp report of a bursting bottle, and the loudly-shouted orders of the foremen, who display the national partiality for making a noise to perfection, the din becomes at times all but unbearable. The number of bottles filled in the course of the day naturally varies, though Messrs. Moët & Chandon reckon that during the month of June a daily average of 100,000 are taken in the morning from the stacks in the *salle de rinçage*, washed, dried, filled, corked, wired, lowered into the cellars, and carefully arranged in symmetrical order. This represents a total of 3,000,000 bottles in the course of that month alone.

The bottles on being lowered into the cellars, either by means of the incline or the lifts, are placed in horizontal position with their uppermost side daubed with white chalk. They are stacked in layers from two to half a dozen bottles deep with narrow oak lathes between. The stacks are usually about six or seven feet high and 100 feet and upwards in length. Whilst the wine is thus reposing in a temperature of about 55° Fahrenheit, fermentation sets in, and the ensuing month is one

of much anxiety to the manufacturer. The glucometer notwithstanding, it is impossible to check a certain amount of breakage, especially when a hot season has caused the grapes, and consequently the raw wine, to be sweeter than usual. Moreover when once *casse* or breakage sets in on a large scale, the temperature of the cellar is raised by the volume of carbonic-acid gas let loose, which is not without its effect on the remaining bottles. The only remedy is to at once remove the wine to a cellar having a lower temperature. A manufacturer of the pre-scientific days of the last century relates how one year, when the wine was rich and strong, he only preserved 120 out of 6000 bottles; and it is not long since that 120,000 out of 200,000 were destroyed in the cellars of a well-known champagne firm. Over-knowing purchasers still affect to select a wine which has exploded in the largest proportion as being well up to the mark as regards its effervescence, and profess to make inquiries as to its performances in this direction. Thanks, however, to the care bestowed, Messrs. Moët & Chandon's annual loss rarely exceeds three per cent, though fifteen was once regarded as a respectable and satisfactory average. The bottles remain in a horizontal position for about eighteen or twenty months, during which time the temperature is, as far as practicable, carefully regulated; for the risk of breakage, though diminished, is not at an end.

By this time the fermentation is over, and there begins to form on the lower side of the bottle a quantity of loose dark-brown sediment, to get rid of which is a delicate and tedious task. The bottles are placed *sur pointe*, as it is termed; that is to say, slant-

ingly in racks with their necks downwards, the inclination being increased from time to time to one more abrupt. The object is to coagulate the sediment, to twist and turn it, as it were, until it forms a kind of muddy ball, and eventually to get it well down into the neck of the bottle, so that it may be finally expelled with a bang when the temporary cork is removed and the proper one adjusted. To accomplish this the bottles are sharply turned in one direction every day for a month or six weeks. Only a thoroughly practised hand can give the right amount of revolution and the requisite degree of slope; and hence there are men who pass their lives in this maddeningly monotonous occupation, and who have acquired such dexterity as to be able at a pinch to twist with their two hands as many as 50,000 bottles in a single day. Sometimes, however, twist they never so wisely, the deposit refuses to stir, and takes the shape of a bunch of thread technically called a 'claw,' or an adherent mass styled a 'mask.' When this is the case, an attempt is made to start it by tapping the part to which it adheres with a piece of iron, the result being frequently the sudden explosion of the bottle. As a precaution, therefore, the workman protects his face with a wire-mask, and assumes therefrom a ghoul-like aspect. In Messrs. Moët & Chandon's cellars as many as 600,000 bottles are twisted daily.

The usual entrance to these extensive vaults—which, burrowed out in all directions, are of the aggregate length of nearly ten miles, and have usually between 11,000,000 and 12,000,000 bottles and 25,000 casks of wine stored therein—is through a wide and imposing portal, and down a long and broad flight of steps. It is,

however, by the ancient and less imposing entrance, through which more than one crowned head has condescended to pass, that we set forth on our lengthened tour through these intricate subterranean galleries. A gilt inscription on a black-marble tablet testifies that 'on the 26th July 1807 Napoleon the Great, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, honoured commerce by visiting the cellars of Jean-Rémi Moët, Mayor of Epernay, President of the Canton, and Member of the General Council of the Department,' within three weeks of the signature of the treaty of Tilsit. Passing down the flight of steep slippery steps traversed by the victor of Eylau and Jena, access is gained to the upper range of vaults, brilliantly illuminated by the glare of gas, or dimly lighted by the flickering flame of tallow-candles, upwards of 60,000 lbs. of which are here annually consumed. Here group after group of the 350 workmen employed in these subterranean galleries—the ordinary staff of the firm numbering 500 people—are encountered engaged in the process of transforming the *vin brut* into champagne.

Viewed at a distance while occupied in their monotonous task, they present in the semi-obscure a series of picturesque Rembrandt-like studies. One of the end figures in each group is engaged in the important process of *dégorgement*, which is performed when the deposit, of which we have already spoken, has satisfactorily settled in the neck of the bottle. Baskets full of bottles with their necks downwards, having been raised from the lower cellar, are placed beside the *dégorgeur*, who stands before

an apparatus resembling a cask divided vertically down the middle. This nimble-fingered manipulator seizes a bottle, holds it for a moment before the light to test the clearness of the wine and the subsidence of the deposit; brings it, still neck downwards, over a small tub at the bottom of the apparatus already mentioned; and with a jerk of the steel hook which he holds in his right hand loosens the *agrafe* securing the cork. Bang goes the latter, and with it flies out the sediment and a small glassful or so of wine, further flow being checked by the workman's finger, which also serves to remove any sediment yet remaining in the bottle's neck. Like many other clever tricks, this looks very easy when adroitly performed, though a novice would probably empty the bottle by the time he had discovered that the cork was out. Occasionally a bottle bursts in the *dégorgeur's* hand, and his face is sometimes scarred from such explosions. The sediment removed, he slips a temporary cork into the bottle, and the wine is ready for the important operation of the *dosage*, upon the nature and amount of which the character of the perfected wine, whether it be dry or sweet, light or strong, very much depends.

Different manufacturers have different recipes, more or less complex in character, and varying with the quality of the wine and the country for which it is intended; but the genuine liqueur consists of nothing but old wine of the best quality, to which a certain amount of sugar-candy and perhaps a dash of the finest cognac has been added. The saccharine addition varies according to the market for which the wine is destined—thus the high-class English buyer demands a

dry champagne, the Russian a wine sweet and strong as 'ladies' grog,' and the Frenchman and German a sweet light wine. The dose is in some establishments administered with a tin can or ladle; but at Messrs. Moët & Chandon's this all-important operation is effected by the aid of a machine which regulates it to the utmost nicety. The *doseage* accomplished, the bottle passes to another workman known as the *égaliseur*, who fills it up with pure wine. He in turn hands it to the corker, who places it under a machine furnished with a pair of claws, which compress the cork to a size sufficiently small to allow it to enter the neck of the bottle, and a suspended weight, which in falling drives it home. These corks, which are principally obtained from Catalonia and Andalucia, are reckoned to cost more than two-pence each. They are delivered in huge sacks resembling hoppockets, and a large room in the establishment is set apart for their reception. Here, after being sorted, they are branded by being pressed against steel dies heated by gas, by women who can turn out 3000 per day apiece. A workman, the *ficeleur*, receives the bottle from the corker, and with a twist of the fingers secures the cork with string, at the same time rounding its hitherto flat top. The *metteur de fil* next affixes the wire with equal celerity; and then the final operation is performed by a workman seizing a couple of bottles by the neck and whirling them round his head, as though engaged in the Indian-club exercise, in order to secure a perfect amalgamation of the wine and the liqueur.

There is another and a lower depth of cellars to be explored, to which access is gained by trap-holes in the floor, serving to bring

up and lower the barrels and baskets of wine, and by flights of steps. From the foot of these there extends an endless vista of lofty and spacious passages hewn out of the chalk, the walls of which, smooth as finished masonry, are lined with thousands of casks of raw wine, varied at intervals by gigantic vats. Miles of long, dark-brown, dampish-looking galleries stretch away to the right and left, and though devoid of the picturesque festoons of fungi which decorate the London dock-vaults, exhibit a sufficient degree of mouldiness to give them an air of respectable antiquity. These galleries, lit up by gas-jets and petroleum-lamps, are mostly lined with wine in bottles stacked in compact masses to a height of six or seven feet, only room enough for a single person to pass being left. Millions of bottles are thus arranged, the majority in huge piles on their sides, with tablets hung up against each stack to note its age and quality; and the rest, which are undergoing daily evolutions at the hands of the twister, at various angles of inclination. From time to time the silence reigning in these vaults is broken by a report resembling that of a pistol-shot, as some bottle explodes dashing out its heavy bottom as neatly as if cut by a diamond, and shattering its immediate neighbours. As the echo of the report dies away, it becomes mingled with the rush of the escaping wine, cascading down the pile and finding its way across the sloping slides of the floor to the narrow gutter in the centre. The dampness of the floor and the shattered fragments of glass strewn about show the frequency of this kind of accident. The broken glass is a perquisite of the workmen, the money arising from its sale, which last year amounted to no less than 20,000

frances, being shared amongst them, while the spilt wine, which flows down the gutters into reservoirs, is thrown away; though there is a tradition that the head of one Epernay firm cooks nearly everything consumed in his house in the fluid thus let loose in his cellars. The way runs on between regiments of bottles of the same size and shape, save where at intervals pints take the place of quarts; and the visitor, gazing into the black depths of the transverse passages to the right and left, becomes conscious of a feeling that if his guide were suddenly to desert him he would feel as hopelessly lost as in the catacombs of Rome. There are two galleries, each 650 feet in length, containing about 650,000 bottles, and connected by 32 transverse galleries, with an aggregate length of 4000 feet, in which nearly 1,500,000 bottles are restored. There are, further, eight galleries, each 500 feet in length, and proportionably stocked; also the extensive new vaults, excavated some five or six years back, in the rear of the then existing cellarage, and a considerable number of smaller vaults. The different depths and varying degrees of moisture afford a choice of temperature of which the experienced owners know how to take advantage. The original vaults, in which more than a century ago the first bottles of champagne made by the infant firm were stowed away, bear the name of Siberia, on account of their exceeding coldness. This section consists of several roughly-excavated low-winding galleries, resembling natural caverns and affording a striking contrast to the broad, lofty, and regular-shaped corridors of more recent date.

Amongst all this stock of bottles it is noticeable that the gay gold or silver foil and neat label,

arrayed in which champagne makes its entry into the world, are nowhere visible. The wine, indeed, does not assume this toilette till the moment of its departure. Before it is packed off, a certain time is allowed to expire in order that it may become thoroughly blended with the liqueur. This period having elapsed, the bottles once more emerge into the upper air and are conveyed to the packing-room, a spacious hall, 180 feet long and 60 broad. In front of its three large double doors, wagons are drawn up ready to receive their loads. The seventy men and women employed here easily foil, label, wrap, and pack up some 10,000 bottles a day. Cases and baskets are stacked in different parts of this vast hall, at one end of which numerous trusses of straw used in the packing are piled. Seated at tables ranged along one side of the apartment, women are busily occupied in pasting on labels or incasing the necks of bottles in gold or silver foil; whilst elsewhere men, seated on three-legged stools in front of smoking caldrons of molten sealing-wax of a deep-green hue, are coating the necks of other bottles by plunging them into the boiling fluid. When labelled and decorated with either wax or foil, the bottles pass on to other women, who swathe them in pink tissue-paper and set them aside for the packers, by whom they are deftly wrapped round with straw and secured either in cases or baskets. Here, again, national prejudice comes into play. England and Russia are partial to gold foil, pink paper, and wooden cases holding a dozen or a couple of dozen bottles of the exhilarating fluid; while other nations prefer waxed necks, disdain pink paper, and insist on being supplied in wicker baskets containing fifty bottles each.

Thus completed champagne sets out on its beneficial pilgrimage to promote the spread of mirth and lightheartedness, to drive away dull care and foment good-fellowship, to comfort the sick and cheer the sound. Wherever civilisation penetrates, champagne sooner or later is sure to follow; and if the Queen's morning drum beats round the world, its beat is certain to be echoed before the day is over by the popping of champagne - corks. Nowadays the exhilarating wine graces not merely princely but middle-class dinner-tables, and is the needful adjunct at every *petit souper* in all the gayer capitals of the world. It gives a flush to beauty at garden-parties and picnics, and sustains the energies of the votaries of Terpsichore until the hour of dawn. The grim Berliner and the gay Viennese both acknowledge its enlivening influence. It foams in the crystal goblets emptied in the great capital of the North to the speedy success of the Russian arms, and the Moslem wipes its creamy foam from his beard beneath the very shadow of the mosque of St. Sophia; for the Prophet has only forbidden the use of wine, and of a surety—Allah be praised!—this strangely - sparkling delicious liquor, which gives to the true

believer a foretaste of the joys of Paradise, cannot be wine. At the diamond-fields of South Africa and the diggings of Australia the brawny miner who has hit upon a big bit of crystallised carbon, or a nugget of virgin ore, strolls to the 'saloon' and 'shouts' for champagne. The mild Hindoo imbibes it quietly, but approvingly, as he watches the evolutions of the Nautch girls, and his partiality for it has already enriched the Anglo-Bengalee vocabulary and London slang with the word 'simkin.' It is transported on camel-backs across the deserts of Central Asia, and in frail canoes up the mighty Amazon. The two-sworded Daimio calls for it in the tea-gardens of Yokohama, and the New Yorker, when not rinsing his stomach by libations of iced-water, imbibes it freely at Delmonico's. Wherever civilised man has set his foot—at the base of the Pyramids and at the summit of the Cordilleras, in the mangrove swamps of Ashantee and the gulches of the Great Lone Land, in the wilds of the Amoor and on the desert isles of the Pacific—he has left traces of his presence in the shape of the empty bottles, with the star-surmounted monogram, that were once full of the sparkling vintage of Champagne.

THE ROMANCE OF OLD LONDON.

NO. V. THE KING'S QUAIR: A ROYAL LOVE-STORY.

IN THE CHOIR, ST. MARY OVERIE.

It may be scarce a year ago,
When Summer had his highest glow
Just pass'd, that I the bridge cross'd o'er
One morning to the Surrey shore
From City side ; on business call
Intent, at some new warehouse tall
Hard by the river's rapid tide,
'Mongst smoking grains, within Bankside.
Arriving there betimes, I found
That he I sought for had a round
Just started on, that ere 'twas done
Would bring the day close up to one.
So, having thus an hour to wait,
And being almost at the gate
Of Marie Overie, midst the grime
Of breweries, with all my time
My own, at once I fetch'd the keys,
And stroll'd about and took my ease
Within that church where ne'er I tire ;
And there I rested in the choir,
Among the lancet arches springing
From massy piers ; and watch'd the flinging
Of sun-flecks on the worn stone floor ;
And saw, beyond the wire door,
The wind-toss'd boughs and grass so green
Out in the churchyard, whence did stream
A summer ray, so warm and bright
It drew me to it by its light.
And there I stood against the door
That looks the Borough Market o'er,
And watch'd the busy life without,
And heard the salesmen talk and shout ;
And saw the ponderous market-carts,
That travel up from distant parts
Of Kent and Essex (slowly creaking
Along the tedious miles) ; and reeking
With garden-stuff and brewers' grains
Was all the air. Two heavy trains
Pass'd by each other overhead
With noise enough to wake the dead.
And yet, in spite of all this bustling
Of thundrous life, I heard the rustling

Of flickering leaves and slender trees
 That flutter'd in the summer breeze ;
 And once again I turn'd me round,
 And trod the choir's foot-worn ground,
 Where my slow step was all the sound.
 And then I went and view'd the screen,
 That eastward of the choir is seen,
 Of Tudor work, in triple story,
 Still fair, though shorn of half its glory ;
 And mark'd with care each quaint device,
 The rich and lace-like canopies ;
 The carv'd angels, each from other
 So diverse, yet like one another,
 The Paschal Lamb and Pelican,
 The emblems of the Son of Man,
 With roses, vines, and twisted thorn,
 And heads grotesque, that seem'd in scorn
 To mock at each solemnity ;
 While, on the spandrels merrily,
 Rude rustics chased, with none to blame,
 Cony and sow at Easter game.
 'Yea, verily,' said I, in praise,
 'Good work they wrought in those old days,
 And brains put they in all their fingers.'
 And then I wonder'd if there lingers
 Such power still, or if that we,
 In these days of machinery,
 Though ruling steam and magic wire,
 Have lost the true artistic fire.
 And then I sat me down again,
 And for a space my busy brain
 I granted leave to roam at pleasure
 Where'er it would ; and in my leisure
 One autumn eve I sought it out
 And track'd its course. It was about
 A wedding in that very choir ;
 Concerning which a royal lyre
 Had once been touch'd to tuneful air
 In that sweet poem, ' King James's Quair.'*
 A poem he wrote by Love's own teaching ;
 And Love still lives, and still outreaching
 Are all our hearts in sympathy
 To one who felt the same as we,
 Although five centuries near have gone
 Since saw the sun his wedding-morn.
 But yet my mind is pierced with pain,
 And scarce can I my grief restrain,
 To think that I his quaint turn'd lays
 Must alter much to modern phrase,
 If I would have them read by those
 Who little leisure have for prose,

* *Quair*: quire or book, from *cahier* (French).

And scarce can snatch of precious time
One minute for the simplest rhyme ;
And only fit for Dryasdust
Would think this tale if spot of rust,
So dear to antiquarian mind,
Within its verses they should find.
Behold, then, plain as plain may be
(Although it almost seems to me
Like sin to spoil a poem so fair)
My version of ‘ King James’s Quair.’

THE KING’S QUAIR.

Anno 1422, 2d Henry VI.

This same yere, in the monthe of Feverer, Sire Jamys Styward, Kyng of Scottes,
spoused dame Johanne the Duchesse’s daughter of Clarence of his first housband, and
the Earle of Somerset, at Seynt Marie Overe.’ *Old Chronicle.*

In those old days, four hundred years gone by,
When our fourth Henry o’er this realm did reign ;
And Geoffry Chaucer’s pilgrims still did hie
To Canterbury, and himself had lain
But five short years within the sacred fane
Of Westminster ; and Gower slept scarce three
On his stone books in Marie Overie,—*

There was a king who did in Scotland dwell,
And Robert was he hight, the last and third
Of that ill-omen’d name ; and writers tell
How weak he was in deed as well as word ;
And how his brother Albany preferr’d
His interests to his lord’s, and caused to die
That king’s son David with great cruelty.

Yet had King Robert left one other son,
A little lad call’d James, but ten years old ;
And fearing as the treacherous duke had done
Unto his brother he might be so bold
To do to this young child, he straightway told
His followers quick to take to France the boy,
Who there in learning might his youth employ.

But as the prince was well upon his way,
And that his ship by Flamborough Head did go,
It so fell out upon an adverse day,
As ‘ weltering waves’ them tossèd to and fro,
That he was prisoner made by English foe ;
And unto London brought, where he did lie
In strictest ward, while tardy years crept by.

* The head of Gower’s effigy rests on his three books, *Vox Clamantis, Confessio Amantis, Speculum Meditantis.*

Yet taught he was, and tended in such wise
That, when that he to man's estate was grown,
A marvel great was he in all men's eyes.

Sweet music could he make with subtle tone*
And tuneful measures write. He was alone
In tilts and wrestling, and in deeper lore,
In jurisprudence, and the art of war,

With these things did they strive to hide the walls
That held him captive, sore against his will ;
But in his heart he ever heard the calls
Of love of freedom and of country still ;
The while his land and kinsfolk wrought him ill,
Nor strove to ransom him : thus he in vain
Sigh'd on from hour to hour in hopeless pain :

' The bird, the beast, the fish eke in the sea,
They live in freedom, each one in his kind ;
And I, a man, that liketh liberty,
What shall I say ? What reason may I find
That fortune should do so ? Thus in his mind
He mourn'd full often ; but 'twas all for naught :
Thus was his deadly life fulfill'd of woful thought.

And all the live-long day and through the night
He would bewail his mis'ry in such wise,
That from his eye there faded all the light ;
And all his gleesome youth was turn'd to sighs.
Darkness doth deepen ere the bright sun rise ;
So when Despair had thick out-spread her pall
Then Love did come and swiftly chang'd all.

And then the morn arose and shadows fled ;
And then the flowers did bloom and birds did sing ;
And all his hopes, that had been well-nigh dead,
Did all revive again, and on light wing
Forth flutter'd free ; and every living thing
Did seem to joy with him, and did indite
A song of love which straightway he did write.

Wherein he tells us how one fresh May's Morrow,
Despair'd of all joy and remedy,
Sore tired of his thoughts and all his sorrow,
He to the Tower's window turn'd his eyet
To see the world and folk that went a-nigh ;
' Though for the time,' saith he, ' of mirth's glad food
I might have none, to look it did me good.'

' Now there was made, fast by the Tower's wall,
A garden fair ; and in the corner's set

* He is said to have been the first to adapt Scottish melody to modern harmony and to have introduced it into regular composition.

† The Round Tower, Windsor.

An herbary green, with lattice long and small,*
All rail'd about ; and so the green trees met
Above the place, o'er hawthorn hedges wet
With dew, that passing there for-by
Scarce living man might any wight espy.

And on a small green twist there sat
The little sweet nightingales, and sung
So loud and clear the hymns long consecrate
To Love's own use, now soft, now loud among,
That all the gardens and the high walls rung
Fill'd with their song ; and thus they sang that May :
"Come, summer, come ! O winter cold, away !"

And then they call'd all lovers to rejoice ;
And then they stopp'd awhile, and, unafraid,
From bough to bough they flew ; and no man's voice
Did scare them as they hop'd about and play'd,
And freshly "in their birdis kind" array'd
Their feathers new, and peck'd them in the sun,
And thanked Love that they their mates had won.'

Then did the king† again cast down his eye,
And there he saw, beneath his prison-tower,
Walking to take the air full secretly,
'The freshest and the fairest young-é flower'
That ever he had seen before that hour ;
'At sight whereof,' saith he, 'there then did start
The blood of all my body to my heart.'

And there I stood' (so doth he further write),
'Abasèd ; and for why ? My wits were all
So overcome with pleasance and delight
Only through letting of my eyen fall,
That suddenly my heart became her thrall
For ever—of free will ; for of menâce
There was no token in her sweet-é face.

And then I drew my head back hastily,
And then once more I bent it forth again,
And saw her walk, so very womanly,
And no wight with her, only women twain.
And then I needs must to myself exclaim,
"Ah, sweet ! are ye a worldly cre-a-tûre,
Or heavenly thing in likeness of nature ?

Or are ye great god Cupid's own princess,
And are ye come to loose me out of band ?
Or are ye very Nature, the goddess
That hath depainted with your heavenly hand
This garden full of flowers as they stand ?

* i. e. slender.

† Robert III. died soon after his son's detention by Henry IV. ; James was consequently the lawful king of Scotland, although the Duke of Albany and his son had long usurped the supreme power.

What shall I think ? Alas, what reverence
Shall I address unto your excellence?"

Then doth he of her further write,
And praise 'her golden hair and rich attire,
All fret-wise cross'd about with pearls so white,
And ruddy rubies gleaming as with fire,
With many an emerald green and fair sapphire ;
And on her head a chaplet fresh of hue
Of parted plumes of red and white and blue.

And many a quaking spangle bright as gold
Wore she in likeness of a true-love knot—
So new, so fresh, so pleasant to behold.
And round her neck (too white to be forgot)
A slender chain of goldsmith's work, I wot ;
And on her throat (more fair than falling snow)
A heart-shaped ruby like a spark did glow.

And for to walk upon that fresh May's morrow
An hook she had upon her tissue white ;
But such her beauty was, it might not borrow
Aught from her raiment, she herself more bright
Than all her jewels ; therefore with delight
I gazed upon her, yet withal with dread ;
But from her steps I could not turn my head.

Now when that I had fully understood
She was indeed a worldly creature,
It did my woful heart so much of good,
That it to me was joy without measure,
My look into the heavenly land so pure.
"Ah well," said I, "were I her little hound,
That with his bells plays by her on the ground !"

Another while, the little nightingale
That sat upon the twig then would I chide,
And say right thus : "Where are thy notes so small ?
That thou of love hast made this morning tide ?
Seest thou not her who sitteth thee beside ?
For Venus' sake, that blissful goddess dear,
Sing on again, and make my lady cheer."

Then, from the window, did I see her go
Beneath the sweet green trees with boughs low bent ;
Her fair fresh face, as white as any snow,
She turn'd from me, and forth her way she went ;
And then began my fever and torment.
Ah woe ! to see her part, and yet to have no might
To follow her ! Methought the morn turn'd night.

And all that day, until the eve did lower,
And Phœbus ended had his beams so bright,

And said at length farewell to every flower ;
And shining Hesperus gan his lampes to light,—
There in the window, still as any stone,
I stay'd all day, and kneeling made my moan.

For so had sorrow seized both heart and mind,
That naught could I but weep and mourn full sore ;
And when that night was come with chilly wind
No tears had I to weep, I had no more ;
So had I spent that day their bitter store.
Then on the cold stone did I lay my head
Half sleeping, half in swoon, still as the dead.'

Now in his book the king doth tell us not
The course his true love took that smoothly ran ;
But there were those it pleased well, I wot,
For Jane was niece unto that mighty man*
The Cardinal ; who well had laid the plan
Whereby that lady Scotland's queen should be,
And he two kingdoms govern presently.

But none the less their love was true and pure,
Although, perchance, by man's devices wrought ;
And day by day it wax'd more strong and sure,
Until the Scots at length their young king bought
With heavy ransom ; and the English court†
Did set again their happy prisoner free,
To taste once more how sweet is liberty.

So in the winter cold these two were wed,
Within the church of Marie Overie ;
And that great Cardinal in hat of red,
And all the monks of that fraternity‡
In black and white, with much solemnity
Full many a psalm and holy prayer did sing,
And made the arch'd roof and the walls to ring.

There by the altar many a face was seen
. Of lady bright ; but none that might compare
With that young flower, King Jamys Styward's queen,
Who by him stood and bloom'd exceeding fair,
A yellow crown upon her golden hair ;
And well that king might kneel right thankfully,
To win at once his love and liberty.

So grand, so rich, so wondrous was that scene ;
So throng'd that church with knights and ladies gay,

* The 'freshe younge flower' was Jane or Johanna Beaufort, the niece of the great Cardinal, then Protector of the kingdom, Henry VI. being an infant.

+ James was a prisoner from 1405 to 1423. His ransom, or rather 'the sum charged for his maintenance,' was 40,000*l.*, 10,000*l.* of which was remitted by way of dowry.

‡ The regular canons of St. Augustine, to whom the church then belonged. Their dress was a white tunic with a linen gown under a black cloak with a hood. Cardinal Beaufort's hat and arms may still be seen on a column in the south transept facing the railway.

That all the carvèd angels in the screen
 - Behind the altar high (so might one say)
 Did seem amazed ; and some did fly away,
 While some on heavenly instruments did play ;
 And some did clap their hands, and some did pray.

And when were duly ended all the rites,
 Much feasting was there in the Bishop's hall
 Of Winchester hard by, for days and nights ;
 And lordly presents lavish'd great and small,
 Of gold and jewels, such as not at all
 Had yet been seen in Scotland ; and with these
 Fair arras wrought with deeds of Hercules.

Then Scotland's king away from England hied,
 And back in triumph to his land did go ;
 And with him went his beauteous, wise, young bride ;*
 And great rejoicings were there, and much show
 And pageants grand ; and all men, high and low,
 For joy of heart with merry mouth did sing,
 To welcome back their new return'd king.

WINCHESTER HOUSE.—Winchester House, the episcopal residence of the Bishops of Winchester, stood near the west end of St. Mary Overie. Part of the massive walls are now built into a block of warehouses belonging to Messrs. Fitch & Cousins, which may be seen from the railway. Cardinal Beaufort was Bishop of Winchester, which accounts for the wedding-banquet being held at his house. It will interest the many travellers who may often have noticed the beautiful and curious circular window in the south transept of the church to know that it is an accurate copy of one which in other days lighted the Bishop's hall, and which was discovered in 1814, when a disastrous fire, burning down several of the adjacent wharves, laid bare the ruins of Winchester House. The window is a foliated design, on to which is worked a double triangle. Winchester House was built in 1107 on ground belonging to the Priors of Bermondsey, and had a park of fifty or sixty acres attached to it. During the Marian persecution, while Stephen Gardiner lived there, it was frequently used as a prison for those 'heretics' who were tried and condemned at St. Mary Overie. It was never used as an episcopal residence after the Civil War; but under an Act of Parliament, passed in 1661, was let to tenants, and gradually fell into decay. It may be seen in Hollar's View of London.

* Of the lady's mental qualifications James writes :

'In her was youth, beauty with humble aport,
 Bounty, richness, and womanly featuré,
 God better wote than my pen can report :
 Wisdom, largéses, estate, and cunning sure,
 In every point so guided her measure,
 In word, in deed, in shape, in countenance,
 That Nature might no more her child avance.'

THE PICCADILLY PAPERS.

THE LIGHT OF THE FUTURE.

Of the different sources of artificial light now in vogue, none can be deemed wholly satisfactory, although some are far more objectionable than others. Save among the poorer classes, the old-fashioned 'dip candle' is but little used as a regular means of illumination, although in many houses it finds its place for occasional use in the cellars and back-kitchens, especially in rural districts where gas is unknown. The tendency to 'guttering' and consequent spilling of grease when carried, the bad and inconstant light, and the continual want of snuffing have brought this form of artificial illuminator into deserved disrepute, notwithstanding its superiority over the yet more ancient rushlight. Oil-lamps, from the single round solid wick of the toy magic-lantern to the most improved form of moderator, are still largely used; and for freedom from unpleasant odour and objectionable heating of the air, and for soft agreeable light, there are few better kinds of lamps to be found than the best forms of the latter class. Good sperm or colza oil, however, is far more costly than petroleum, even when the latter is subjected to purifying processes of complex character for the purpose of improving the quality of the light or of diminishing the liability to explosion and other accidents from the volatility and inflammability of the liquid, and the evolution of unpleasant odours from imperfect com-

bustion: consequently petroleum lamps of various kinds, from the humblest quarter-inch flat wick fixed in a rough glass bottle mounted with an inelegant chimney to the most elaborately decorated argand or duplex drawing-room illuminator, are to be met with everywhere. Wax, paraffin, and composition candles are preferred by some; the cost of these, however, usually considerably exceeds that of either petroleum or colza oil when the amount of actual illumination obtained is the same; and moreover there is always a liability to the dropping of melted wax on furniture, dresses, &c. For the illumination of large public rooms and workshops, the streets, railway stations, and the like purposes the above illuminating agents are practically useless, gas in some form or other being much more effective and less costly. The faults of gas, however, as usually supplied from gas-works are such as to render this source of artificial light of very questionable benefit when introduced into private houses, especially into bedrooms, sitting-rooms, and libraries. As a rule, the gas thus supplied is generated by the distillation of coal, the quantity of gas practically consumed obtained from resin or other vegetable sources being so comparatively small as to be inappreciable. Now coal invariably contains sulphur, usually in the form of the brass-like mineral known as 'pyrites' or firestone, so called from the excessive hardness of some kinds of the mineral, caus-

ing it to strike fire with steel, and also from its combustibility owing to the sulphur present. The result of heating sulphurous coal in the retorts used by the gas manufacturer is to give rise to a very complex mixture of products, some of which are of most offensive odour. Some portions of these products are condensed to liquids on cooling, forming 'gas-tar' and 'gas-liquor,' the smell of which is far from ambrosial; the remainder is a mixture of aeriform fluids of several kinds, the relative proportions varying with the way in which the distillation has been conducted and the character of the coal employed. Unfortunately these aeriform fluids always retain, even after the most careful purification, a small quantity of sulphurised compounds, which practically cannot be wholly removed by any processes that can be applied on so large a scale as that requisite in the works of a large gas company; and in consequence, when the gas is burnt the sulphur present becomes transformed firstly into sulphurous, and secondly into sulphuric, acid, which two acids consequently are disseminated throughout the air of the rooms in which the gas is burnt, to the great detriment of carpets and upholstery, bookbindings, pictures, gilding, and the like, the delicate colours of many dyed and tinted articles being bleached, more or less, by the first acid, whilst leather, cloth, silk, &c., are gradually rendered rotten and otherwise damaged by the second. A yet greater objection in the eyes of many is the peculiar smell which the ordinary coal-gas itself possesses; leakages from pipes and taps are always apt to occur, thus slightly impregnating the air of the house with the odour of gas, although to many nostrils the taint is imperceptible,

either from natural want of sensitiveness, from the perpetual colds which the climatic aberrations of England render unavoidable, or from habit. Moreover one of the many constituents of coal-gas (the gas known as carbon oxide) is an absolute poison, being in point of fact the active agent in the fumes of burning charcoal, the deadly narcotic effect of which is so often applied, intentionally or otherwise, as a convenient means of euthanasia; so that deaths from the inhalation of an atmosphere charged with this gas, from the breaking of a pipe under the floor of a bedroom or from a tap being left inadvertently turned on, are actually registered from time to time. The chances of explosion and fire from the formation of mixtures analogous to the fire-damp of the mine by leakages from gas-pipes into the air of a more or less closed space, and the detonation of such mixtures when a light is brought near, are not so small as to be inconsiderable, not a month going by without some such casualty, often attended with fatal results, being reported in the newspapers. Perhaps the greatest evil of all, however, is the high degree of heat and 'closeness' generated in rooms in which gas is largely burnt, and where no adequate provision is made (as is the case in most ordinary houses) for the removal of the products of combustion. The latter inconvenience is largely due to the character of the gas-burners employed, a portion of the gas escaping in a half-consumed state, and communicating to the air the unpleasant odour and taint characteristic of air breathed over and over again by a large assemblage of people; and for the same reason, viz. that the air is charged with organic matters. Even the best forms of argand burners, how-

ever, in which the combustion of the gas is facilitated by the use of a chimney and an annular burner, so as to admit air inside the circular flame, are not wholly free from this defect; the only radical cure for which, and the development of heat and of sulphurous acid, is the complete removal from the apartment of the products of combustion by special flues for the purpose. As regards the mere production of excessive heat, this is a needless defect in our gas system. By modifying the way in which the coal is originally distilled it is easy to manufacture a gas of much higher illuminating power than average gas now possesses; so that by the use of such gas the same amount of light can be obtained by the employment of a much smaller bulk of gas, and, which is more important, with the accompaniment of a much less development of heat. The bulk of gas obtained per ton of coal, however, would be considerably less than at present, and even if a higher price were charged for the gas, based upon the increase in illuminating power, the profits of the gas manufacturers would be usually somewhat lessened; accordingly, as London, in common with many other large towns, is supplied with gas manufactured by companies, this obvious means of avoiding one of the evils of the use of gas in private houses is not adopted. It must be borne in mind that this very defect in coal-gas as an illuminating agent makes it more appropriate as fuel; and that such an alteration in the character of the gas supply as that mentioned above would not be attended with advantage, but rather the reverse, to those who employ gas for cooking or heating purposes, especially as the tendency to smoke would be increased.

One of the most ingenious pro-

cesses for combining the advantages of illumination by gas with cheapness and freedom from sulphurous emanations has unfortunately not proved successful on a large scale, although under certain conditions single houses and even factories can be satisfactorily lit up by its means. The method referred to consists in allowing a current of ordinary air, or of other permanent gases, combustible or otherwise, to pass through a reservoir containing the highly-volatile mixture of hydrocarbons distilled from petroleum at the lowest temperatures in such a fashion as to take up a considerable amount of the vapours of these bodies; air, &c., thus charged with hydrocarbon vapours can be burnt at a jet precisely as coal-gas. The weak points in this system are, firstly, that the hydrocarbons used are of necessity a mixture of substances of different degrees of volatility, consequently the air that first becomes carbonated is much more highly impregnated with combustible matters than later portions of air which pass through the reservoir when the most volatile portions of the hydrocarbon mixture have already evaporated, and when consequently little but the less volatile matters are left; secondly, in cold weather the hydrocarbon vapours taken up in the carbonating reservoir are very apt to be more or less condensed in the pipes conveying the gas to burners at a distance of more than a few feet, so that sometimes there is too little combustible matter left in the air to give a luminous flame or even to burn at all. This condensation in the pipes is, in fact, a well-known phenomenon with coal-gas. In cold weather a considerable quantity of the vapours mechanically retained by the gas are deposited in the mains and service-pipes,

often leading to partial blocks or complete stoppages. The consumer, however, has the compensating advantage that whilst his gas as it reaches him is of sensibly lower quality in winter than in summer (supposing that he lives at any appreciable distance from the gas-works, and that the gas, as tested at the works, is of the same illuminating power all the year round), he gets more of it for his money in cold weather than in hot—for the gas is sold by volume, so much per 1000 cubic feet ; and there will be a greater absolute quantity of matter in a given bulk of gas, if that be measured when cold, than there will if it be expanded by heat, just as a gallon of water weighs more than a gallon of a rarer fluid, such as spirits-of-wine or turpentine-essence.

It is not wonderful, then, seeing the serious defects and inconveniences attaching to even the best of our modern means of illumination, that repeated attempts have been made from time to time to utilise another source of light, *viz.* that generated by electricity, the source of the electricity employed in the earlier experiments being the chemical action of the galvanic battery, with later ones mechanical motion (steam or water power, &c.) transformed into electrical currents by the aid of magneto-electric inductive apparatus. That a sufficiently powerful galvanic battery will furnish a current of electricity capable of generating a brilliant light has been known for many years ; in fact, ever since Franklin's discovery of the identity in kind (but not in degree) between the lightning of the firmament and the sparks produced by rubbing glass, resin, &c., and Volta's and Galvani's experiments proving the identity between this frictional electricity and that set

up by chemical agency in the forms of apparatus bearing their names (Voltaic circle, Galvanic battery). The most convenient way of generating light by electricity is to cause the current to pass through wires, at the ends of which are fixed two rods or slender sticks of a hard compact form of carbon obtained in the manufacture of coal-gas, as an incrustation on the upper parts of the retorts, &c., this carbon being, in point of fact, derived from the decomposition by heat of some of the constituents of the mixture of gases and vapours evolved. When these carbon-points are brought very close together, the electric current passes in the form of a continuous succession of sparks, succeeding one another at inappreciably small intervals, the ends of the carbon becoming white hot, and minute particles of carbon being continually detached principally from the positive pole ; these portions of incandescent carbon give rise to an arch of flame extending between the two rods, and of dazzling brilliancy. As the rods gradually waste away their ends become separated ; consequently the light would fade and finally cease, but for a mechanical contrivance, whereby their ends are kept at a fixed distance, the machine being regulated by an electro-magnet driven by the current itself. The current diminishing as the ends recede, the electro-magnet becomes weaker, and consequently less able to resist the action of a counter-balancing spring or weight which, coming into play, brings the carbon-points nearer together again, and reestablishes the current. Electric lamps of this kind have been long in use ; but their application has for the most part been confined to their employment as substitutes for, or improvements on, the

oxyhydrogen light for magic-lantern purposes, photography, theatrical effects, and the like, the chief practical use to which they have been put being the production of an intense light for lighthouse purposes. It soon became manifest that galvanic electricity is too expensive to render the practical application of the electric light for general illuminative purposes at all successful, and consequently induction currents from magneto-electric machines were soon substituted for the currents produced by chemical action : several forms of most ingenious machines for this purpose have been invented. For some dozen or more years past various lighthouses in France and England have been lit in this way, and the success of these first experiments has stimulated inventors to further researches, in order to utilise this light for illumination generally. Thus several workshops have been lighted at night in this way (for example, Messrs. Siemens Brothers' Telegraph Works at Woolwich ; and the works of Messrs. Head, Wrightson, & Co., Stockton-on-Tees ; and of Messrs. Ducomm in Mülhausen) ; whilst at several of the French railway stations, the quays of the port of Antwerp, the Avenue de l'Opéra, Paris, and many other places, experiments have been made, demonstrating clearly the applicability of this source of light to such purposes. For signalling purposes at sea, illumination of the land in the vicinity of fortifications to prevent night attacks, and analogous military services, the electric light seems to be specially adapted.

One great defect in the electric light as worked in the earlier experiments is, that whilst the beam of light emanating from the lamp is so brilliant as temporarily to

blind an observer looking at it, the shadows are by contrast most intensely black ; so that if a large space is lit by one single light, highly illuminated spaces and dark shades alternate, producing some confusion and want of clearness of vision. To avoid this, a number of lamps can be used in a sufficiently large area, so disposed that the shadows produced by one are illuminated by the others, and so on. The main difficulty in this arrangement is that either a number of magneto-electric machines must be used, or else the current from one central machine must be furcated into as many distinct branches as there are lamps to be lit ; and practical difficulties attend the splitting up of the current, so as to get tolerable uniformity among the branches. Another way of overcoming the difficulty is to dispose a number of powerful reflectors about the illuminated space in such a way as to reflect light on to the parts left in shadow by the original lamp, and so to disperse the light about by continual reflection ; this method, however, is not always practicable. Recently improvements have been made in the apparatus, whereby a furcation of the primary current into half a dozen sensibly equal branches is said to be attained ; and trials made at the Magasins du Louvre have indicated the justice of the claim. These experiments have been repeated in London with a fair amount of success, both at the West India Docks and the South Kensington Museum ; on the first occasion some difficulties were encountered from the defective condition of the prime mover (a steam engine), so that all the trials were not perfectly satisfactory. But by the use of a more perfect engine, furnished with a very sensitive governor, so as to attain a con-

siderable degree of constancy in the rate of revolution, and consequently in the current generated, much better results were obtained in the later experiments. The most important novelty in the form of apparatus thus tried consists in the relative disposition of the rods of carbon between the ends of which the voltaic arc is established, thus generating light. In the arrangements hitherto adopted, the two rods have uniformly been in the same straight line, usually vertical, so that one was directly under the other; the negative pole, which wastes most slowly, being usually placed above, and permanently fixed, whilst the positive pole is connected with a movable bearing, retained in proper position by the counterbalancing action of an electro-magnet and a spring, as above described, so as to keep the size and brilliancy of the voltaic arc tolerably constant. M. Paul Jablochoff, a Russian officer in the engineer service, devised the following arrangement known as 'Jablochoff's electric candle,' to the action of which the success of these recent experiments is largely due. The two slips of gas carbon are placed side by side, separated by a layer of nonconducting cement, of which kaolin is the chief constituent. In this way the distance between the ends of the carbon rods is kept constant without any machinery being required, whilst, moreover, the kaolin cement is slowly volatilised by the heat evolving vapours, which by their ignition add to the brilliancy of the light. The whole compound rod is placed in a vertical support, like a candle, whence the name. Instead of making the electric current branch itself, the several candles required may be all included consecutively in the same circuit, from four to six being readily supplied with

electricity without difficulty. The 'candle' of course wastes away, the rate of consumption being about four inches per hour. In order to keep up a continuous light without requiring to change the exhausted candles for new ones, an ingenious switch arrangement is employed, where by moving a lever the current is turned away from the burnt-out candle and on to a new one, so that the effete carbons can be thus removed at leisure, and new ones substituted for them. When the brilliancy of the light is too great, ground-glass globes can be employed to moderate it, producing a very pleasant and soft light. The most noteworthy feature of the light thus produced is its pure white tone, the best gas-lamps looking quite yellow compared with it. As a result, it is quite possible to discriminate between the most delicately-shaded fabrics when illuminated by the electric light, the shades being as readily distinguishable as by sunlight. Gas or candle light, as is well known, never allows of certain tints being clearly discriminated; thus dark olive-greens, pinks, and blues all look much the same as black by gaslight, whilst light-cream colours and straw shades appear white. When illuminated by the electric light, however, each piece appears of its own natural colour.

Another valuable property of the electric candle is its ready portability—the actual carbons and holder being light even when protected by a globe; the whole is as readily transported as an ordinary lantern, due allowance being made for the trailing of the essential covered conducting wires. For unloading ships by night, where a powerful light is desirable in different parts of the holds as well as on the quays, the light

is admirably adapted. Notwithstanding the intense ignition of the carbons and the intervening kaolin cement, the candle gives out very little heat.

More recently still a yet further improvement in the 'candle' has been brought out, in which the carbon rods are altogether dispensed with, their place being taken by thick metal wires or rods. The kaolin composition is made into a thin plate about an inch and a half long, an inch broad, and a twentieth of an inch thick. Between the vertical parallel metal rods connected with the electrodes of the magneto-electric machine such a plate is slipped edgeways. On the top edge is fixed a thin slip of graphite, which becomes heated white hot by the current. The porcelainous kaolin composition is thus vitrified on the upper edge, and whilst fused will conduct electricity sufficiently to set up the electric arc. The plate wastes very gradually, at the rate of about a millimètre (one twenty-fifth of an inch) per hour. The light generated by this improved form is softer and mellower than that of the carbon candle, and also somewhat more steady and constant, although the flickering with the latter is much less marked than that of the best electric lamps hitherto in use; for household purposes, and where the most piercing and intense light is not requisite, this newer form of candle seems well suited. As regards cost, it is stated that four carbon candles will cost per hour about one shilling for the candles themselves, some sixteen or eighteen inches being jointly consumed. The engine-power required is two-horse, costing about fourpence per hour; so that, allowing for wear and tear of machinery, less than eighteenpence an hour is the total cost, whilst the light obtained is

equal to at least 400 ordinary gas-jets, burning fully 1600 cubic feet per hour, and hence costing at least five shillings. If these statements are substantiated (and from the experiments of Professor Anthony, adverted to in a former paper on the subject,* there is good reason for believing them to be in the main correct), there seems to be a considerable probability that a few more years will see a great revolution in the system of artificial illumination adopted in our large cities. So imminent does a change seem, that a paragraph recently appeared in the newspapers stating that the municipal authorities of a certain town in Great Britain had decided not to complete the purchase of the gas-works, which supply the town with gas, from the company to whom they belonged, on the ground that it seemed likely that lighting by gas would shortly be superseded by electric illumination; whilst, for the same reason, a considerable depreciation in the price of gas shares took place immediately after M. Jablochoff's first experiments were made. Nevertheless, even should this result be brought about, it does not at all follow that the manufacture of coal-gas will come to an end; on the contrary, just as the introduction of railways did not, as was predicted by the pessimists, lead to the ruin of the breeds of horses, but rather tended to increase the use of horses for the purpose of conveying goods and passengers about, owing to the greatly increased demand for locomotion of all kinds, so it is not improbable that the disuse of gas as a means of obtaining artificial light directly would in the end rather tend to an increase in its consumption as fuel for culinary purposes, heating hot-water pipes for

* *London Society*, June 1877, p. 551.

warming houses and producing ventilation, driving magneto-electric machines, and the like objects. The gas producer also would then no longer find it essential to employ complicated purifying apparatus for the purpose of bringing down the percentage of sulphur in the gas to something within the maximum amount tolerated by law, for it would no longer be absolutely necessary to fix a low maximum. Moreover, in order to supply good gas for heating purposes, it would be by no means essential that coal of first-class quality should be employed, as much refuse vegetable matter now thrown away in our dustbins, lignites, and the like comparatively valueless matters, might be largely employed as a source of gas eminently suitable for heating purposes, although not well adapted for use as an illuminant; whilst the mixture of carbon oxide and hydrogen produced by blowing steam through red-hot coke (water-gas), which has hitherto been applied to no considerable practical uses, might be made cheaply from the impure coal or charcoal left from the manufacture of gas from such vegetable refuse matters, and employed either alone or mixed with the gases evolved during their distillation.

PHOSPHOR BRONZE.

The bronze of the ancients was probably not produced in the same way as modern bronze, viz. by melting together copper, tin, and sometimes small quantities of other metals, but by smelting impure copper ores, or possibly a mixture of copper and tin or other ores, whereby a complex alloy was in most cases obtained. Many of the ancient bronzes yield on analysis numbers indicating a composition more nearly approaching to brass

(an alloy of copper and zinc) than to true bronze, whilst in most of them zinc is present to a greater or lesser extent. Modern bronze usually consists of one part of tin with from eight to twelve of copper, and suitable small quantities of lead, zinc, iron, &c., according to the purpose for which it is required. In these alloys considerable difficulty is experienced in obtaining castings of uniform composition throughout, as the constituent metals have a tendency to separate from one another, something after the fashion of oil and water when intermixed by shaking, though not to so great an extent. Further, the tin in the bronze oxidises very readily, and the oxide of tin thus disseminated through the mass seriously impairs the useful qualities of the alloy, and notably diminishes its tenacity and power of bearing strains without rupture. To avoid this difficulty phosphorus is added in small quantity to the composition in the form of a phosphide of copper, or of copper and tin, previously prepared and added in suitable proportions. The effect of this is to deoxidise the oxide of tin already formed, and to prevent the production of any more, the phosphorus taking away the oxygen from the oxide of tin as fast as it is formed. In this way a purely metallic alloy is formed (*i.e.* containing no oxide disseminated through the mass); the excess of phosphorus, if present in not more than a certain quantity, does not diminish the strength of the alloy, but on the contrary seems rather to add to it, just as a little carbon added to iron converts it into the much tougher material, steel, and as arsenic when added to lead in small quantity hardens and toughens it. A paper in which the practical applications of alloys thus toughened were discussed

and largely illustrated was recently read before the Society of Arts by Mr. Alexander Dick ; five distinct classes of phosphor bronze were described, differing somewhat from one another in their composition, and hence possessing different properties, rendering them specially valuable for certain applications. Thus one kind is soft and malleable, and furnishes good wire, tubes, &c., superior to copper and brass for many purposes. Another kind is very fluid when melted, and is well adapted for castings ; when cold it is more strong and elastic than ordinary bronze. A third variety is very tough and compact, and suitable for machinery that has to resist heavy wear and tear, such as piston-rods, pinions, &c., whilst the other two kinds are respectively adapted for making bolts and nuts, and the like, and for bearings for moving axles, &c. This last composition is of special character, being made by fusing together phosphor bronze and a softer alloy, which separate, to some extent, on cooling. The mass thus consists of a kind of hard skeleton of phosphor bronze, with a softer intervening portion, something after the fashion of the dentine and enamel in an elephant's tooth. It seems, however, that bearings of this kind have not given universal satisfaction, as it was stated during the discussion on the paper that when gritty matters get access to the bearings they do not last as long as ordinary ones of gunmetal, where some amount of zinc to harden the bronze is also present.

FIVE-O'CLOCK TEA.

The institution of five-o'clock tea is certainly one of the pleasantest and most sociable of modern life. Practically, ladies have always had tea at five in the after-

noon. Our fashionable late hours are in reality wholesome country hours. They dine in the middle of the day, then they have their tea at five, and the dinner is practically a supper, more plentiful and more wholesome than an avowed supper, because it is taken at an earlier hour. We have all heard the legend of the country clergyman who dined at lunch, took five-o'clock tea, and went to bed as the gong sounded for dinner. A few hours after the established lunch, ladies like tea for its freshening and reviving qualities. It is really the same with men, only the men prefer to say that the tea gives 'a tone' to the dinner, as if it was another form for sherry-and-bitters. It was a lady's gracious and sociable thought that she would not take a solitary selfish cup of tea ; but she would let her friends know that when at home she invariably took tea at five, and that there was tea for all who chose to come. The great drawback is that until ladies have 'their day,' as in Paris, you may go to a nice house and be disappointed of your cup of tea, as your hostess is herself taking tea with a friend. When the day has been fixed and invitations given, the afternoon tea is transformed into a kettledrum. That subtle domesticity, which is the peculiar charm of a five-o'clock tea, is lost. The refreshments are elaborate, and the music is that of a regular matinée. When it is not a concert, it is a *conversazione* of a limited kind. Either is good in a way, but the way is not so good as that of the five-o'clock tea pure and simple.

We prefer it even to the Parisian 'day.' Because when you go to see your charming hostess there is a constant stream of guests through the glittering *salon*. You see a great many people, but you do not

see your friend the hostess. Now it is the happiness of the English institution that you are asked to drop in at five o'clock, because you are appreciated by your hostess and her set. At a large party she must distribute her attentions impartially; but unrestrained conversation is possible in the afternoon; and you really want to see something of your pleasant hostess and her home-party. It is a liberal education to know her; she is just the kind of person whom Lord Chesterfield wanted his son to know, and any Lady Chesterfield would like her daughter to know. She has sense and wit. And if you store away anything of the kind yourself, she will be able to elicit such dormant electricity. Of course there are many men who 'drop in,' but you are always sure that there will be a predominance of ladies at the ladies' peculiar meal. Husbands who have anything to do, and overworked men generally, cannot often be present. There is a system of order and counterbalancing in the nature of things, and men who are thrown incessantly in the company of men, in courts, in clubs, in committees, cannot do better than amend their character and retrieve their fate by the five-o'clock tea. You get all the babble of the town, the freshest and brightest stories, the touches of character, the essence of public questions, the current criticisms of books and pictures, the secret history of the times. We do not say that there is too much of this kind of conversation in London or anywhere else; but it is sometimes to be met—very often to be met approximately—and never oftener than at tea-time. We know one great lady who retains the lost art of conversation in all its grace and grandeur. A music passes away when she ceases to speak; and in leisure moments we

put down her thoughts and recollections on our tablets. This great lady—of course there were a peculiar set of circumstances—once had fifteen hundred callers within three days. There was a river of tea each afternoon. But once we received an invitation to tea in common with six thousand other ladies and gentlemen. We did not mind it once in a way; it was a curiosity in social life of a very big sort, but we should not care to undergo that crush of crushes again.

Tea itself is a subject that admits of more discussion and variety than might be expected. Sometimes you get a very wonderful tea which has been sent by private friends from China. Sometimes you get a tea which has been brought from Russia, and which came to Russia by the overland route. There is all the difference in the world between tea and tea. It is not that the overland tea is better than the tea which comes by sea, but that the latter is subjected to preparations which are thought likely to be beneficial during a long voyage. We think that the Russian mode of having tea is exceedingly pleasant. At the Paris Exhibition every one had the amber-coloured tumbler with lemon. It is a very pleasant change from the received method. We try to get it, but housewives are very conservative in their notions. Still, as we have the dinner à la Russe, why should we not have the tea à la Russe as well?

Tea and conversation are exactly the things that go so well together. It is just the gentle stimulant that produces the required effect. Indeed we have got hold of a really scientific formula in the matter: it is good tea that makes good talk, and as the tea deteriorates so does the talk weaken in exactly the same proportion. Tea is not a bad thing to talk about at tea-time. We recall the absurd legends of the

clever men who have sat up at night working, with towels about their heads and drinking copiously of hyson. Depend upon it, that sort of man never gets on. It is either a myth or a mistake ; either he did not do it, or if he did he never did anything else worth speaking of. The best intellectual work is work done in the daylight. When tea first came into vogue lots of doctors protested against it. They declared that it might bring on paralysis. The country doctors say that the chronic use of tea among old women of both sexes is the cause of the indigestion that ruins the public health ! John Wesley used to declaim against tea, and called upon his followers to join in a total abstinence league against the use of it. His teetotalism meant that people might drink anything else except tea. He had not the good fortune of our modern Templar ; but his oratory, usually so persuasive, could not prevail against the use of tea, even among his most devoted adherents, and apparently great John found it best to give up the idea.

It is when you are admitted into the *vie intime* of a house that the tea is the pleasantest. You go, not to meet a crowd, but to have the frank, free, restful change that really does one good. A few friends drop in one by one, fresh from driving, shopping, and visiting ; and the young ladies of the house, even though not 'out,' break the thin ice that separates their nunlike existence from the world. They will show you their last drawings, their last photographs, and sing you their last new song. They will talk to you of themselves and their family—of the boy who has got his commission or his scholarship, or the girl who has got her first offer ; and if you break through your insular reserve and speak of yourself, you will meet with sym-

pathy and encouragement. The western lights have all paled, but you have sat in the cheerful firelight glow till you hardly know how late it is. Presently there is the well-known rap at the front door, and your old friend, the master of the house, strides in, bright and eager to his heart, and shakes your hand. 'You mustn't think of going, old man ; we dine in an hour, and are all by ourselves.' This is sometimes the cheerful *finale* of the afternoon tea. There is a murmur of lively voices, a battery of inviting eyes, and the thing is settled. Very pleasant is the dinner, but perhaps you were better pleased with the five-o'clock tea.

NEW BOOKS.

Within the last few weeks a flood of information has been poured upon the social, domestic, and financial condition of Egypt. Every year has had its writers on Egypt, which from time immemorial has possessed a wonderful fascination for the human mind ; but since the time when Mr. Lane first wrote his charming books, there have been no writers till quite recently who have familiarised us with the modern aspect of the country.

In addition to Mr. McCoan's work, which we were glad to welcome some time ago, we have now another interesting volume,* travelling over precisely the same ground, and by combining the two volumes we obtain a view of stereoscopic accuracy and liveliness. The most interesting and vivid part of M. de Léon's book will be found in the vivid portraits, which sometimes approach caricature, of the people

* *The Khedive's Egypt, or the Old House of Bondage under New Masters.* By Edwin de Léon. (Sampson Low & Co.)

who have principally figured in recent Egyptian history, such as Nubar Pasha, Cherif Pasha, and the late abominable Moufet-
ish Ismail Sadyk, and of course we hear much about Mehemet Ali and M. de Lesseps. It is interesting to compare the contradictions as well as the concords of the two works. Mr. McCoan writes almost as if holding a brief on the Egyptian side of things. He has had every help from the Government. He bristles with facts and figures. He has all the statistics at his fingers' ends. We have just a modicum of distrust for his work, as coloured by his good wishes and by the good treatment he has experienced, but do not for a moment suppose that he is otherwise than perfectly honest and impartial. Though perhaps a more solid, he is by no means so lifelike and entertaining a writer as M. de Léon. But while the two writers have the same ground in common, as we have said, they hold it in much contradiction. Although M. de Léon gives us a less exact narrative, he appears to have had a longer acquaintance with the country than Mr. McCoan, having been American Consul-General under three successive Viceroys, and his portraits of the three, as we have intimated, are very vivid and somewhat sensational. The question of slavery is one which has especially emerged into notice since these books were written. It is professedly abolished in Turkey, but Mr. Gallenga has lately been telling the world how it still exists in Constantinople. M. de Léon has an interesting chapter on the equatorial empire of Egypt. As a matter of fact, Egypt has no *de facto* possession of the new empire to which it has advanced such a monstrous claim. It has with difficulty preserved its communica-

tions with its expeditions, and at present has only a single steamer on a single lake. It is not the cause of the slave which has urged Egypt on in its expeditions towards Abyssinia and the Central Lakes. It is the Khedive's lust for territory, or rather, according to M. de Léon, his impressionableness to anything that promises to bring in money. M. de Léon tells us that the Khedive, of whose hospitality and wines he has liberally partaken, has three manias—‘a passion for real estate, a vaulting ambition, and a mania for building.’ But these two writers are either not in possession of, or do not wish to remind us of, the real facts in respect to the Khedive's endeavours to abolish slavery with the help of Englishmen. We should like the public creditors of Egypt to keep a strict watch on the Khedive's lust for territory. M. de Léon writes with great sympathy respecting the unjust and degraded condition of the Egyptian fellahs. ‘The Egyptian labourer has not risen much above the level of that life we see sculptured on the walls of the old tombs and temples thousands of years ago. He is still in the hands of merciless taskmasters—a strong ass crouching under burdens.’ Those who have read Mr. McCoan's book will do well to compare M. de Léon's with it. The subject is a mine comparatively unworked, and might well elicit even another work.

Dr. Willis, who has earned his spurs as the biographer of Spinoza, has opened up new and original ground in discussing the life and death of the unfortunate Servetus.* He has made use of a large mass of original documents. Nothing

* *Servetus and Calvin: a Study of an Important Epoch in the Early History of the Reformation.* By R. Willis, M.D. (Henry S. King & Co.)

is more interesting in the literature of the present day than the mode in which ancient State documents have been sifted and published, and a whole flood of illustration poured forth on events only imperfectly comprehended by contemporaries. Dr. Willis has a theory to prove that Calvin was the means of putting Servetus to death, and this, not in consequence of the intolerant and persecuting spirit which then pervaded nearly all religious life and thought, but through private grudge, enmity, and revenge. As we only hear Dr. Willis's, and are hardly in a position to get Calvin's, side of the question, we must decline to adjudicate. Dr. Willis has given a genuine instance of historical investigation, and what he tells us of Servetus's anticipation of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood is highly curious and interesting.

One of the most interesting and complete books of the kind which we have seen for a long time is Dr. Rink's monograph on *Danish Greenland*.* All those who recollect how frequently Disco and Greenland have been mentioned in our own Arctic expeditions will be interested in such a work. There is now no doubt that the Danes discovered America centuries before Columbus or Vespucci. This is abundantly proved both by the Icelandic sagas and

also by the remains of the old Danish churches and other edifices. Greenland itself, though generally supposed to be part of America, is more probably an island or cluster of islands. Dr. Rink, who is the Director of the Royal Greenland Board of Trade, has already given us a most excellent work on the Eskimo, and his present exhaustive monograph will leave nothing to be said by any future writer. The work is so full of matter, that to give a fair summary would be like abbreviating an index. The true hero of the story of Greenland is Egede the Danish missionary, and his work is taken up and sustained by the Moravian missions. The geographical contrasts of the country are of the most violent character. Entering the fjords we have verdant valleys, wooded slopes, and luxuriant vegetation; but penetrating beyond the margin, we have the boundless icy plateau of the Arctic zone. Dr. Rink tells us that the whole mass of floating icebergs are exclusively discharged from the inland ice. The author deals very fully both with the natives and the Danish settlers. The reindeer meat has now ceased to be in daily use, but the quantity of seal taken is prodigious. Eight pounds a year gives an income for a family. We had marked many passages for reference or quotation; but we by all means advise our readers to refer to the work, to which we can give a most thorough and hearty recommendation.

* *Danish Greenland: its People and its Products.* By Dr. Henry Rink. Edited by Dr. Robert Brown. (Henry S. King & Co.)

Proud Maisie.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEAD-SEA FRUIT.

I COME now to the nearest approach to an adventure that I ever had in my life.

Three days had gone by, outwardly tranquil, but for me all one feverish unnatural dream of most morbid pleasure; nerves and brain stirred and strung up to that pitch when they refuse to relax, and to allow of rest or sleep. To counteract the strain, and set the balance of being to rights again, I would try ways of tiring myself out, developing a taste for open-air exercise that surprised everybody. I wanted to exhaust myself physically, till I should have no strength left for thinking and feeling, and Nature herself must enforce a vegetative repose. I learned to row, dragged Eva out for long walks before breakfast over the Seckendorf estates—anything to still this cold excitement vibrating within me night and day.

The present ordeal was so new, so unthought of, that it found me quite off my guard, as against an unrecognised adversary, who first pulls out his weapon when he is close upon you. There is a dire fascination, the fascination of evil, as of something strange and untried, which, like vertigo when we look into deep water or over a precipice, takes hold of the spirit unawares, tempting it and drawing it down into the giddy vortex of the game of self.

The third day was intensely hot and sultry. Sophie and Hilda towards two o'clock esta-

blished themselves out on the lawn for the afternoon. They had become fairly friendly lately, since Hilda had been pleased to drop her haughty nonchalance of manner, and one subject at least they had in common, upon which they could talk by the hour and never tire or quarrel—the subject of dress.

Coming into the billiard-room, I found it empty. But Jasper had just been there, I knew; the volume of Heine he was reading lay open on the table, a half-finished piece of music he was copying for me beside it.

He would return in an instant. My first impulse was to seat myself at the open piano as usual, run through song upon song, with words and without; a prelude to an afternoon like the last and the one before. My second, which I obeyed, was to take my garden-hat, and promptly, before he reappeared or Sophie and Hilda had seen me, to slip out of the house, resolute to free myself for a few hours from the sweet captivity of Castle Adlerberg.

Eva was sketching at the Swallow's Nest, and my original intention had been to go there and join her.

But a wayward fancy seized me to take a long walk first, and, yielding at once to the caprice, I struck into the next path that offered itself, one leading out into the country and away from the Seckendorf estate.

As if from sheer perversity I had chosen the least attractive route of all, a walk nobody ever took, and no wonder. To begin with, it was

lonely and monotonous; the road, which was execrable, meandered on for miles through dull country, without leading to anything of the faintest interest at last, and the wayfarer must perforce return the same way by which he came. Probably Sophie had never been a mile along it in her life. The castle inmates seldom cared to stray out of their own grounds, which extended for miles in other directions. Who, indeed, with such a park as Adlerberg boasted under their windows—Adlerberg with its river, ruins, rocks, and hills—would dream, except by way of a penance, of making a pilgrimage along a dreary road, that dwindled in time to a drearier foot-path leading across potato-fields and barren hills to a few wretched cottages?

As I said, no one ever did, and I had but a dim idea of where it would land me as, forgetting Eva and the Swallow's Nest, I trudged along, until I had put three miles between me and Castle Adlerberg. But the bleak ugliness of the scene was almost congenial that day. Beauty sickens us at certain seasons. There is a time for daffodils and marigolds, for roses and pomegranates, and there is also a time for thorns and briers, gall and wormwood; things quite as real, more enduring, and as worthy a poet's theme.

I was unceremoniously recalled to the world of prose by the sudden bursting of a heavy shower. Though prepared for rough roads, and half-enjoying their discomfort, I had forgotten the weather, and never paid attention to the long-gathering thunderclouds overhead. A violent storm now caught me half-way across a shelterless common, and in a few minutes I was wet to the skin. I ran for some cottages I saw in the distance, but long before I could reach them

the rain had done its worst. The group of mud and plaster habitations huddled together before me I recognised as the little hamlet of Neudorf, which I knew by name as the first to be met with in this direction. The girls of one or two of the poor families there made lace, and from time to time came round to the castle to try and sell it. They had appeared there very often lately; for Hilda had taken an immense fancy to this commodity, purchased a good deal on each occasion, and given an order for more.

I saw standing in a doorway a girl whom I remembered as having brought over her wares to Mrs. Gerard a day or two ago. So I accosted her and asked for a shelter, adding that I came from Castle Adlerberg. She called her mother, who received me most hospitably, moved with much pity for my dripping condition. My garments, alas, were past drying except by a furnace, and there was no fire in the cottage. However, the eldest daughter's best Sunday and saints'-day gown was brought out, and I was entreated to try it on. I arrayed myself provisionally in the bright-coloured stuff skirt, black jacket, apron, and thick shoes, even tying a variegated cotton handkerchief round my head to complete the disguise and amuse my hosts and myself.

Whilst I sat chatting to the woman as fluently as my scanty acquaintance with her peculiar *patois* permitted, there came a loud knock at the outer door. She went to open, and a long parley ensued between her and the visitor. I heard a man's voice speaking in accents of broken German. It riveted my attention, it sounded so familiar. Yet so inconceivable was the supposition that I should meet that voice

here, that I failed to put a name to it for the first moment.

One of the children who had remained in the room peeped out of the window, and explained to me that it was a strange gentleman, a traveller who had borrowed an umbrella of them a few days ago, and had come to return it.

That was simple and humdrum, indeed; but whose voice was that?

The next minute he walked straight into the room where I sat—Leopold Meredith.

I was thunderstruck, but not so aghast but I marked the cool careless air with which he sauntered in, as if familiar here already. I turned away sharply and kept my face carefully averted, but my disguise rendered but slight precaution necessary. He never looked at me. The peasant-girl, to him, was worth no more scrutiny than the clumsy table, broken chairs, and kitchen pots and pans. The good woman, for her part, concluding, no doubt, that I was ashamed to be seen by a gentleman in my rustic habiliments, said and did nothing to draw his attention to me.

He stayed for a few minutes, rewarding the peasant's wife right royally for the loan of the umbrella, and then departed, mother and children reverentially ushering their benefactor to the door.

'Pray who may that gentleman be?' I inquired of the woman when she returned. 'How comes he in these parts?'

Very innocently she explained that he was an English tourist, staying, she supposed, at Rosenbad, a town some six miles farther on, where travellers came occasionally sketching, fishing, botanising, or collecting stones; she was not very clear on the subject, but whatever she did not know she took for granted.

I watched her and the girl narrowly, questioned them as closely as I dared, and soon felt convinced of their ignorance of their visitor's identity. They were all honesty and stupidity. Their information and ideas barely went beyond their cluster of cottages and the little allotments attached.

Sophie and her father had been more than a name for them in the former's maiden days, when now and then in hard seasons she had played the Lady Bountiful to her poor neighbours. But never since her marriage had she appeared at Adlerberg till this summer. As for her husband, he was an abstract idea to the cottagers. He might be old or he might be young, a German or a Turk—they did not even know his name; Leopold's shooting and deer-stalking excursions would certainly never have brought him in this direction.

As for this Englishman, this visitor, he was evidently on a walking tour. There would pass at least two or three of his kind every year, and Neudorf had ceased to wonder at such apparitions. There is an ignorance so dense that it stops short of gossip, conjecture, or curiosity, and remains quite satisfied with itself.

'Now what object on earth can Mr. Meredith, whom we thought still at Ludwigsheim, have for playing off this little farce upon us?' I mused silently, puzzled.

The old dame meanwhile had taken up her knitting, and forthwith became more garrulous and confidential.

'Ah, to be sure, and the gentleman has friends at the castle,' she said, looking up; 'the gracious lady may have met him there. I even think he said he had been over to see them yesterday. To-day he has left this parcel for

my girl to take when she goes tomorrow with the lace. Perhaps the gracious lady would like to see.'

And she brought it out unsuspectingly. The address was in a disguised handwriting, to a Miss Harvey in London, 'care of Mrs. Gerard, Castle Adlerberg'; and the contents, I should have said, were a letter, nothing more.

I stared at the sealed paper, and the reality of what a suspicious fancy had forecast flashed upon me all at once with blinding, scathing force. An indescribable horror, a sensation of sickening disgust, followed. I felt ashamed to live. If the reckless effrontery of the intrigue had confounded me for the first moment, there came a reaction quickly enough, in an insight into its full ugliness and iniquity. The odious duplicity, the false lulling of poor Sophie's irritated and too well-founded jealousy, Leopold's departure a blind for stolen communications, perhaps for stolen interviews,—it all revolted me past expression. O, the selfish wickedness of two people, sacrificing and duping those nearest to them; egotists who all the while put in their claim—a claim that no one was allowed to dispute—to be respected, honoured, loved, by their own dupes!

The fear of anything, however vivid or imminent, is worlds removed from the impression of the actual catastrophe. The whole drama that had been slowly evolving itself these last few weeks at Adlerberg, and in which I too had been more than a mere shocked spectator, now first stood before me plainly, stripped of gloss and glamour, in its native hideousness.

There was Leopold, playing false to his wife, who had done him no wrong; Hilda deceiving her husband. How would it end? There was worse than this; the

path, dark as it was, had yet darker windings. Leopold's part had a dash of malignancy in it to make it thoroughly odious. Instinctively I doubted the unmixed nature of his feeling to Mrs. Gerard. I detected that he had not forgiven her. Indeed her nature, charms and all, was not of that temper which stirs up the forgiving principle in us. He would have liked her now to compromise herself for him, for the man she had professed to hold cheap; let her feel and have to own herself the slave of his will, repenting that in the past she played with him and then threw him overboard. Better not ask to what such a labyrinth of evil will lead at last.

And I?

The spectacle of another, self-abandoned to those waves of ill, had awakened me suddenly to a true view of the treacherous sea on the edge of which I myself had been standing. Such a shock roughly brushes the film from the mind's eye, and the mind shrinks appalled and ashamed at the first faint symptoms that one has been tampering with one's spiritual honesty.

You detect your neighbour cheating at cards, and turn your back upon him henceforth as a swindler. Your game has been fair and open. Good. But there are insidious games to which honest players may not put their hand without damage to their honesty, and I, to say the least, had willingly sought and dared just such a pernicious influence.

That proud numbness of heart, on which I had relied as a shield, whilst on the one hand it took away what excuse a master passion can give, on the other, how long would it last? For who shall say where temerity ends and madness begins? Instinctively as I

thought I put my hand before my eyes.

All this went through my mind as I stood leaning out of the cottage window, pretending to watch the weather.

Suddenly I perceived that the afternoon sun was shining out brightly, and the sky on every side nearly cloudless again. It was approaching five o'clock, high time for me to think of getting back to the castle. But my own clothes were not half dry yet; so I begged for the loan of the costume I wore, to walk home in. Struck by a sudden thought, I offered to be the bearer of the lace for the English lady. The girl who was to come and call about it to-morrow might then, I suggested, bring my apparel. They seemed to assume that I was longing, for a bit of fun, to present myself to my friends at Adlerberg in peasant's attire, and acquiesced in the arrangement. So I bade farewell to the hospitable folks, took the basket containing the lace, and the little parcel that was to accompany it, and, thus novelly accoutred, went on my way alone.

Plenty of time to collect myself and to meditate as I plodded homewards up the dismal stony road. Not a living soul did I meet till I reached the castle. My disguise was sufficiently complete for the stolid servants in the yard not to recognise me as I passed round to the front door. The porter did not know me till I spoke, and he then fell in readily with the idea that a little jest was intended, and volunteered the information that I should find Mrs. Gerard in her room and alone.

I knocked, and then showed myself at the door.

'What is it?' said Hilda, glancing up carelessly. 'O, the little lace-girl. You may come in,' she added, in German; and I came in

accordingly, shutting the door behind me.

Hilda, without troubling herself to cast a second glance at the humble messenger, took the basket from my hands, saying,

'Leave this, and come again to-morrow. You may go now.'

And as I went towards the door she began turning over the lace quickly. Then she put her hand on the parcel, took it out, and was about to read the enclosure, a letter. She showed no sign of surprise, or even agitation, except by her curious, momentary oblivion of the fact of a human presence.

I moved, and looking up she gave a little start at the sight of the peasant-girl she had thought gone.

'O, are you waiting for the money?' she said hastily, and pulling out her purse. 'I take all that there is in this basket. What do I owe you?'

'Hilda!'

And I suddenly pushed back the disfiguring coloured handkerchief, which had served better than a mask.

What a start, this time! She sprang up, changed colour, and instinctively felt for support, nervously clutching the back of the nearest chair. We were both silent. Then Hilda rallied, and looked at me askance, still afraid to speak, because doubting what I knew—how little, how much.

'It is of no use,' said I; 'I have seen Leopold Meredith. I know he is not at Ludwigshain—perhaps never has been—that his going was a feint to put others off their guard, when an accident had opened their eyes.'

'Upon my word,' I resumed slowly, as she stood mute and confounded, 'it was a bold game to play. Yet it is only by the merest chance that it has *not* suc-

ceeded. The writer of that letter could certainly not have foretold who would be its bearer to you. But to dare everything on such a throw you must be reckless—both.'

Her brow contracted, her lips were compressed. A new thing for her to be thus abashed, she whom I always pictured to myself with another face, rather as I had seen her stand, a bride triumphant, at the altar by Jasper's side. Her position was horrible, pitiable. But there was that in her which might kill pity in the tenderest as fast as it rose—a calculating habit, a hard, self-seeking instinct that never left her, and rushed to the surface even in the supremest hour.

'What do you mean to do?' she asked tentatively.

'I? what do you suppose?'

'Do you mean to tell anything to Sophie?' she said, with difficulty, the words coming as if extorted by pain; 'because if you do, it is all over, and soon Jasper will know.'

Jasper! The sound of his name made me shrink. It exasperated me to hear it on her lips at that moment.

'You can ruin me, of course, if you like,' she continued miserably; 'a word from you, and I am lost.'

'Hear her,' I cried, bewildered. Could this be Hilda? Hilda throwing herself on my mercy, folding her hands, and praying hypocritically, 'I am helpless. Kill me; for I know you hate me. I, your victim, will neither resist nor complain.'

'And Sophie,' she resumed insinuatingly, half encouraged by my silence, 'your friend. *She* has never injured you. Think a little before you use your power to wreck her happiness.'

'Poor Sophie,' I returned bit-

terly; 'such a reminder comes finely from you, who have made that happiness not worth a day's purchase. A little sooner, a little later, hers must founder. But for you and Leopold Meredith, you may ruin yourselves. I'll have no hand in it, to hasten or delay. I only wish to get away from here—and you—and your hateful secret.' O, if only I could bury the knowledge of it, and leave that behind as well!

'Look here, Maisie,' she began, suddenly changing her manner, and speaking in a tone of earnest, appealing confession; 'you are under a horrible, false impression. How can I help it? I have no means of *proving* the truth to you. I will tell you all—only believe me. The real and only person to blame, from first to last, is Sophie. She is absurdly jealous, and after that unfortunate occurrence ten days ago—the merest chance, and no fault of ours, as you recollect—she treated Leopold to the most frantic scene. Now he detests hysterics and storms—all men do. He told her so, but found it was hopeless to try and make her listen to reason, and was only too thankful to seize an excuse that happened to present itself for getting away the next morning.'

'To Ludwigsheim,' said I ironically.

'Well, he did go there at first.' She paused, and went on with an air of ostentatious frankness, 'Can you not understand how natural it is that old acquaintances, such as he and I, meeting again after two years and so many changes, should have a very great deal to say to each other? We only wish to meet and talk openly, as friends should. But Sophie is so foolish and suspicious, that she won't allow us to do so without making a fool of herself, and tor-

menting poor Leo till he is half mad. Do you know how far she carries her jealous *espionnage* now? Every letter that reaches the castle in the usual way she contrives to examine. So Leo and I are forbidden to look at each other, speak three words, or be alone together for one minute without her playing spy upon us; or else one must prepare for tears, tempers, and a fuss. The prospect was more than Leo's patience could bear, and so—and so—'

'O, go on,' said I, looking at her steadily. Surely even she must despise herself at that moment.

She abandoned that line of self-defence, took up another strain, entreating me not to betray her; solemnly vowed to end the affair for ever, to leave Castle Adlerberg immediately, and never see Meredith again; if only I would give no hint, by manner or otherwise, to Sophie, who would make an *ecclandre*, regardless of the scandal, or to Jasper, who would kill her.

Jasper again! Well, I suppose it would have been difficult to leave his name out of the matter altogether, however I might wish to have it so.

'He *must* love you,' I said desirously; 'and this is what has come of it. And you, Hilda, you *would* marry him. Have you repented enough?'

I spoke wildly, out of the abundant bitterness of my heart; but in her guilty dread she thought I was threatening. In vain I assured her again and again that she had nothing to fear from me. Accidental detection had roused in her a full sense of the danger into which she had run, and in her panic she felt she could never be safe again. She exclaimed that she knew I hated her; that she deserved it, for she had been

a false friend to me two years ago; and that, suspecting I might stand in her way with Jasper, she had done what she could to detach, nay, to alienate him, though not a spark of genuine feeling could she plead on her side in excuse. I knew her art of delicate misrepresentation and subtle mischief-making, having often witnessed its exercise. She was a skilful poisoner of a mind, when she would. It is incalculable how far light inventions, judicious ridicule, hints, and innuendoes may work on a dawning, half-grown predilection. Honest people are more or less at the mercy of the unscrupulous, and must be so to the world's end. Some things in the past were explained now.

Men, they say, are more commonly selfish than women. The world may be glad the fact is not reversed. For it is rarely, if ever, that a man forms such a cold deliberate creed of selfishness, or follows it out so minutely and remorselessly, as the selfish woman.

Hilda—for once prudence and judgment had deserted her—abased herself without call, without reserve. She did not deny that her affection for Jasper had been and remained a pretence. Her present fear of him seemed genuine enough. She knew she had feigned less well of late, risking the loss of her empire over him, and felt it now, when she needed her power most, to use for throwing dust in his eyes.

Leopold Meredith—well, she would not deny he had a certain hold over her still. She had been weak, foolish, rash, led on to the brink of a precipice, or at least to compromising herself pretty irrevocably by clandestine communications. But she had been saved, and all through me. The accident, my discovery of everything, had made her feel the folly and mad-

ness of her present course, and she had learnt never to expose herself to such misconstructions again. I was her preserver, in fact, if only I would be generous—complete by silence and secrecy this good work I had begun, and thus earn her everlasting gratitude.

If only I could have believed in the sincerity of a single word!

'Don't talk of generosity,' said I plainly; 'my strongest wish is that this shall remain a sealed subject for me. But as for your ruin, your salvation, I know, and so do you, that you hold them, and not I.'

If the demon inside me had once asked for revenge, I was now cloyed and satiated, to the point of loathing, with a kind that only demons can enjoy, that sickened me, and cured me of vindictiveness for ever.

But Hilda can never unsay what she had said, never hide from me any more the desolation of her married life.

That trial-evening was over. It had been hard work to go through with. The moral malaria creeping over our circle seemed to oppress me physically. I thirsted for change, and to escape into a purer, clearer atmosphere.

At night I went to Eva, and after talking a little, I said,

'I am quite ready to leave Castle Adlerberg now; the sooner the better. I have felt the truth of everything you said or implied that morning, three weeks ago. I beg your pardon for refusing to listen then. I only wish I had. But it is not too late. Say we must start the day after tomorrow.'

'Shall we not wait at least till Mr. Meredith returns? It will be more polite.'

'No, no,' said I quickly. Of

all things I shrank from the sight of his face. 'Let him come when he pleases, but let us wait for nothing. We have been "going" so long that Sophie will scarcely think it sudden or rude if we leave at the shortest notice. But if you love me, don't ask me any questions. I think there is poison in the air, and it all but caught hold of me. Let us get away now that we can, and in time.'

We could give such a good, commonplace, unanswerable reason for taking our departure—namely, that we were daily being expected by our nearest relations in England—that no one had a word to say. Hilda's brow cleared when she heard of it. She seemed to breathe more freely, convinced at last that I wished her no harm.

Sophie grieved over the parting, which bade fair to be for a long while, but resigned herself to the inevitable; and early on the morning of the very day for which Mr. Meredith had announced his return, Eva and I had left Castle Adlerberg.

That same evening Herr von Zbirow, at his villa on the Main, received what I trusted he might take for what it really was—the last word of our interview a few days ago, and my tardy acquittal, his roll of music returned, with my name, the date, and '*en route* for England' written underneath.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'Verfehlte Liebe, verfehltes Leben.'
HEINE.

THE scene changes. It does change very often and very abruptly on the modern stage of life. Unities of time and place are unknown in five-act tragedies and comedies there. Another week, and Eva and I are set down

in England, trying to take up the old thread of London existence again as best we may. Conscience twitted me throughout the journey with a sense of defeat, a jeering reminder that here was I flying home from the identical enemies I had left home to escape; influences I would have flung aside for ever, brought back on me now, and into which late incidents had infused a very scorpion's sting.

Sophie, upon our farewell to Adlerberg, had exacted a promise from us that we would write to her from England at least once a week. The correspondence began without delay. Eva wrote diligently and regularly, and, for a time, Sophie's letters were both frequent, gushing, and voluminous.

The Gerards, I learnt from her, left the castle a few days after our own departure, and started on their way back to England. Sophie and her husband, when all their guests were gone, speedily got tired of Adlerberg, and returned to spend the autumn and winter in Ludwigsheim. For about two months afterwards her letters continued to appear punctually week after week, but I was struck by a gradual alteration in their tone. It was odd, constrained, depressed, sometimes bitter. But she was never explicit on the subject of her grievances except by word of mouth. The missives became shorter and shorter, more irregular in their arrival, and at last ceased altogether. Eva mourned and moralised a little over this fresh proof of fickleness in woman. I feared another cause. The most engrossing troubles are incomunicable. Heaven help Sophie Meredith! It was doubtless going hard with her in the battle of life.

Home again! What shall we say of its sweetness? Granting the truism that there is no place

resembling it, how far is this an equivocal compliment? Some would reply entirely so, and that the uniqueness of a home is apt to lie in its singular disagreeableness. But the old axiom has a deep root, and, in the face of all, I should maintain that it is something to be thankful for to have, comfortable or uncomfortable, a *pied à terre* in this scrimmage of a world. There is profound wisdom in not quarrelling with one's bread-and-butter, though on the other hand be it remembered that most men, and even women, cannot live on bread-and-butter alone.

I found mine outwardly much as I had left it. The twins, however, had made such strides in general mental culture as were almost alarming. Claude was being 'crammed' for a public school, to which he was mercifully to be sent at last. For the present he was studying with a private tutor, a young man of singular promise, who always held his mouth wide open. With this preceptor Claude kept repeatedly urging Ethel or myself to fall in love, in obedience to the laws of life as revealed in novels and plays. Ethel scouted the notion with ineffable contempt. Her mind, at fourteen, was already made up. She meant to marry for money, she boldly declared, stipulating at the same time that 'money' should also be a gentleman. Poor Mr. Harebell she evidently put down as fulfilling neither of her conditions. Cordially she despised the 'creature,' as she called him, a whippersnapper who forgot to have his hair cut, lisped, wore spectacles, and dabbled in rhyme.

He was very learned on some subjects, I discovered, and modest to excess about his scholarship; withal a bad poet, and vain beyond

all measure of his verse. After an acquaintance of a very few days he presented me with two fantastically bound little volumes containing his compositions. In these the poet, portrayed by himself, appeared as a terrible character, given over to fierce false love, wine, gaming, and all the wildest extravagances of misguided youth. Only my personal conviction of the mild and harmless disposition and thoroughly unexceptionable life of the writer took away from the force of these confessions so far as to make them sound almost comic. Before long he began paying his serious addresses to me. I would not encourage him, but he did not desist; I even think he was secretly grateful to me for my behaviour, for on that very account I became more precious as a source of inspiration to his fertile pen, which was especially eloquent on the theme of unfortunate love.

The Gerards on arriving in England went first to spend some time with Jasper's mother at Brighton, previous to settling down for the winter in a new house they had taken in London.

For Hilda hated the Priory; spoke openly now of her aversion to such a cramped, small, old-fashioned place, odiously situated in a cockney suburb, fit only for tea-gardens, school-treats, and picnic-parties.

The value of the site she knew was enormous, and from the first her favourite scheme had been that Jasper should sell the property, and purchase something more pretentious in a 'desirable' neighbourhood. To part with the Priory he absolutely refused; but he would not insist on burying her there alive, as she pleasantly expressed it, and decided on letting it for a year.

The last eighteen months had seen a new set of fine buildings

spring up in our immediate neighbourhood, in the very street where Eva's former studio had stood, and which, with its rambling old houses and irregular roofage, had been demolished to make way for a row of tall, roomy, ornamental dwelling-places, all cut out on one pattern and in the very latest style of architecture.

As fast as they were completed they were eagerly bid for. Nothing could have been more exactly suited to a young couple entering on fashionable London life together. It was one of these residences that Jasper and Hilda had taken, and here before Christmas came they were finally installed.

So the new year opens quietly, and I say to myself, as we do at such turning-points, that I must begin a fresh page, a new life. But look at it how I will, the page is blank; and as for my new life, it is much more like an end than a beginning.

Eva had fallen back upon her art vocation, her all in all, and devoted herself to it more assiduously than ever. Mr. Severn had had a serious attack of illness since our return, and his broken health forbade her leaving him as formerly. So she had set up a studio in her home at Westburn, where she worked away patiently, from week's end to week's end, among her old pets, animal and vegetable.

She had her reward. As a *genre* painter her name was making way. Her pictures were rapidly becoming the rage, and sold as quickly as she could paint them. Her future, as an accomplished and popular artist in her special style, seemed bright and secure.

I envied her. 'Why not imitate me?' she asked laughingly, when I said so. Too late, said I.

To engage in a pursuit with any zest, one must have, or imagine oneself to have, some dim prospect of taking a foremost place some day; but to do this, special gifts or early training are necessary, and I had neither. Moreover that healthy appetite for petty distinctions, which keeps work a-going, and which all have, to begin with, was spoiled in me already. No craving to see lubrations of mine in print at the bookstalls, my feminine daubs on the walls of an exhibition, ever fired and stimulated me now.

On the other hand, looking coolly into my present, colourless, purposeless subsistence, I must own that a cobbler's life was glorious by comparison.

My mother made no secret of her feeling that this provisional routine had lasted long enough, and that now it was high time it should reach its expected and natural goal—marriage. She was growing impatient for mine—to whom, was of minor consequence in her eyes; but this fond hope of hers had been, she thought, too often deferred. One day she began to sound me very delicately on the subject of Claude's tutor, and the possibility of my returning his affection in my secret heart. She hinted at her fears lest I might have been constraining myself to turn a deaf ear to him and his sonnets, out of filial scruples and a natural presumption that she would not approve of so pound-foolish a match; and intimated next that, so far from setting her face against my inclination, if I thought I could accept Mr. Harebell, she would make every pecuniary sacrifice in her power to settle me fairly in life with the author of *Confessions in Song*.

Phoebus! how I laughed! This manner of treating the proposal

puzzled her hopelessly. She confessed that for her part she thought Claude's Mentor a very attractive young fellow, and a most mellifluous writer. To be sure some of his poems might strike you as rather strong, almost shocking, if you did not know the man. But this startling fervour itself might, she fancied, have told in favour of his suit with me. What could have sealed up my heart thus against the utterances of Love's votary, who wrote so fluently, too, about his master? She was at a loss to guess the obstacle. Jasper Gerard? Never. She half suspected the part he had played in my past. But now that he was married and done for, married withal to my earliest friend, I could not, surely, be so silly, so preposterous, so unprincipled, as not to forget.

I tried to console, to reassure her. But, ah me, it is lost labour to speak of the intricacies of life to those who have never seen or felt more than its rough outlines, and to whom, therefore, it seems so simple and manageable. They are enviable souls. A microscopic mind's-eye is the worst of drawbacks to happiness here below.

She was soon satisfied that at least I was not pining away. Nobody, in fact, could have been less like Patience on a monument. I seemed to have developed a taste for general society, and for popularity, which thoroughly pleased, but also astonished, her, as something new. I was always ready to go out with her everywhere, to sing my best at parties and amateur concerts; I dressed with care, not to say with coquetry, and appeared to have given up those Bohemian predilections and fashions that used once so sadly to distress her. As the London season approached she ceased to regret that Mr. Harebell had failed to touch me by his

roundelay. The right man, and in rather more brilliant circumstances, could hardly fail to turn up shortly, at one or another of the booths in *Vanity Fair*.

So far was she from knowing or understanding that any possible marriage must make me acutely miserable. Even Eva, with whom I now regularly spent every Saturday and Sunday at Westburn, must needs attack me one day with the common wish on my behalf. Should I not marry?

I put my fingers to my ears.

'Let my mother talk of that, who knows next to nothing about me. But you, Eva, you must be mad to ask such a thing. You know I think it was wicked of Hilda to marry Jasper Gerard. Now if to-morrow I were to accept Mr. Harebell or any one else, I should be no bit better than she.'

Eva sighed, saying reproachfully,

'Yes, because you still let your mind harp on the old subject—'

'No, no, a thousand times no! I caught her up vehemently, adding emphatically, 'I give you—let this be the last time we name the subject between us—my solemn word, that, for all of that old love that stirs in me now, I could believe it had never been.'

'Then why do you shrink so from the very idea of being made love to?' she asked innocently.

'Because it changed me before it left me. It has just killed in me the possibility of loving any one else; more than that, taught me to loathe an idea I might otherwise have tolerated—the idea of marrying on amiable regard.'

'What do you mean to do, then, all your life long?' resumed my practical friend—'remain an old maid, like me?'

'Perhaps. You are far happier than Hilda, than Sophie.'

'It is pleasant enough to be an old maid, if you can be something else besides. But you have no regular occupation, Maisie, and say yourself that you will never begin now. You have not cultivated any of your talents in particular, except your voice, and voices go just when an artist's hand or an author's head would be at its strongest.'

'O, hush!' I exclaimed. 'What I am living for now I don't like to ask myself, much less to tell you.'

'Shall I tell you?' she said gravely. 'You are waiting and watching to see Jasper Gerard's happiness go to ruin.'

I bent my head in sullen assent.

'But mind,' said I, looking up unflinchingly, 'I will not touch it. I have had a lesson—a glimpse of things so hateful that I am sworn to let that alone for ever. But, though I shall stand apart, I shall see it fall.'

'And then?' she asked.

'Then I will die, or go into a convent, or marry Mr. Harebell or any one you may choose for me,' said I.

'Maisie,' she said hopelessly, 'you are incurable. Why must you talk in this wild and random way?'

'Because,' I replied, in earnest, 'every day I feel more and more that I have nothing particular to gain or to lose in life now. Offer your husks to those who have never seen flowers. I shall not die, however; but live, and let live. The best hope for me is to forget at last that I ever had a soul, or what it was like.'

From that day forward Eva never talked to me again on the subject of matrimony.

She had spoken the truth. It

was from no fresh hankering after gaiety that I went into society incessantly and more willingly than ever before, but simply because an attraction stronger than prudence, stronger than pleasure, drew me to every party, every kind of gathering where I was likely to meet the Gerards.

Not to sham friendliness with Hilda. That, with the recollection of what had passed between us at Adlerberg still vivid in my mind, was impossible. I avoided visiting her at her house as far as I could, and, even in society, instinctively held aloof from all but the merest formal intercourse with her or with Jasper.

But we had numbers of visiting acquaintances in common, and seemed to be always meeting. I could study the two then as much as I wished; read changes to which no others present had the key.

Hilda watched me uneasily at first; made studied efforts to be friendly, as people do with those whom accidental circumstances have forced into their trust. But she was soon convinced of my unaffected neutrality, and that I had no ambition to be her enemy or her confidante. I knew enough. Her face, when caught unawares, often wore the dark absent look of one who has entangled herself past easy extrication. Wanting in the will, she could not find the way. But in public she was all smiles and repartees, bright, gay, talkative as ever.

Jasper, however, is no Janus. He leaves it to his wife to have two faces. He has but one, over which the shade I saw growing when first we met again at Adlerberg has deepened and become fixed. I do not speak of a cloud of jealousy or mistrust—Hilda for the present is laudably impartial in her flirtations—but an expres-

sion telling of that barren inner struggle, that civil war of a mind divided against itself that wears out the soul.

It could not have gone otherwise. Sooner or later he was bound to realise that he had wilfully linked his life with that of a woman whose ingrained idiosyncrasies bid everlasting strife to his own. In the moral struggle for existence that follows, she has the advantage, caring only for herself. For him such a future is chaos. I see this, and am never tired of seeing it. Is it wicked?

What should it signify to me that he and his wife live in the next street or miles away? What are the lights in that house, the visitors at their door, the hours they keep, to me?

Something still, it appeared. I studied their outward life—got to know it well. It was easily learnt by heart. For Hilda a certain ‘fast’ and fashionable routine in its meretricious artificial brilliancy and prestige was Alpha and Omega. I knew, from recollections of old, that Jasper had no taste for it; moreover that never before had he suffered himself to be drawn into it.

Assuredly that is not the life he pictured to himself he would lead with his beautiful bride, such an existence as once he had sketched to me as his ideal. Delicate generosity would have been the moving force; the ruling ambition, so to handle wealth as to draw in those who most need and can least take thought for its enjoyments, to share them with him, thus spreading the genial, softening, refining influences of taste, culture, and liberality by invisible threads in a thousand directions—a mission which few have the least idea how to fulfil, and to which he seemed to the manner born.

But look at the pitiable exchange. Opposed and checkmated by his own queen, all so gradually, so plausibly, that no man could have stood out against it without putting himself in the wrong. All Hilda's connections belonged to the world of fashion and convention, and, as it turned out, she neither could nor would have friends and ties elsewhere. How should he withdraw her from the medium she loved! how debar her from making it her sphere, and trying to shine there as others did?

Socially speaking, it was his own world as much as hers. Pity he was no longer free to use, or not to use, it after his own fancy. The young man of the upper classes, who has a natural dislike or impatience of the slavery of an artificial set, may lead his own bright particular life apart, without thereby losing caste in the least; but only so long as he remains unmarried. Bachelors and spinsters have a charter to be original, eccentric in their habits, to choose their own companions and amusements, and be practically nonconformists, without risking expulsion from the fold. The world smiles and has patience. But when once an establishment is started, the case is altered. Then the new couple must hoist the orthodox colours of the set to which they belong, or take the consequences. According to their zeal in doing what is 'required' of people in their position, and making a proper display, will they be reckoned, honoured, and sought after, or sunk into obscurity and neglect. Such a world's favour to Jasper might seem a thing he could very well dispense with, but Hilda cared for little else.

That spring season was unusually gay. The fancy had taken me to see something of

the whirl into which I had never thrown myself before, and the opportunity was good. I wished to take the measure of its immeasurable emptiness, join in the pursuit of its threadbare charms and prizes, analyse them, and know their net worth.

It was the study, not of a class, but of a set. The more we live, the more surely we learn that virtue is pretty equally distributed over all castes of society. But there are circles in all castes, from the lowest to the highest, which are corrupt, root and branch; and it was in one of these demoralising cliques that Hilda lived, moved, and had her being.

My mother only saw the outside, which was rather aristocratic, and amused and pleased her. But once penetrate beyond, and there was no blinking the picture. As for the bluntness of moral perception, the hugged prejudices, the studied disregard of truth and straightforwardness there prevailing, it must frankly be said that the tone was calculated to disgust the most favourably-disposed neophyte not yet hardened to the game.

Only now and then, what with gaslight, glitter, lovely women's faces, Parisian dresses, dance-music, diamonds, and ever-varying and increasing display, the excitement, half feigned to begin with, became more and more genuine, till, paradoxical though it may sound, sheer excess of humbug ended by generating a real *bonâ-fide* intoxication. It was this delirium Hilda was always seeking. Its power is by no means despicable. It might gain Jasper at last, and drown in him the regret for a better part renounced.

Hilda's flirtations he despised, but was too keen to attach more importance to them than they

were worth. She did not care to disguise that she liked and would court compliments, flattery, and admiring attentions from men, public deference and private envy from women, just as she liked and would have muffins and toast for breakfast. But for not one of the foolish fellows she encouraged to dangle in her train had she a spark of feeling stronger than indifference. Even I could see that. If she did not love her husband, neither did she care a jot for those miscellaneous specimens of youth, gilt or ungilt, that adorned her coterie. To be sure her ways made people talk; but what of that? No harm was meant. Other wives in her set

did the same, and worse. Her individuality was coming out in its true colours at last. Very soon Jasper will have no more to learn.

The rooting up of an attachment is, to certain tenacious natures, the most painful sensation inflictable. The sight of the gradual crushing out of life in a love was before me now. In time, when Jasper has passed from the last stage of contempt to that of indifference, he will cease to feel; but he could not reach that by one leap. Already his judgment, his head, condemned Hilda fatally; but in all hearts worth the having love dies hard.

(*To be continued.*)



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[See "Landscape Memories"]



BY ROBERT DE VILLE DE CHAVRAY.

LANDSCAPE MEMORIES.

No. IV. SOUVENIR DE VILLE D'AVRAY.

Nor in the spring-time, when the woods are twining
 Wreaths for young love ;
 Not in the summer, when the sun is shining
 As king above :
 But in the mellow autumn is the grove
 Most sweet wherein to rove.

Spring is so innocent, she hath no knowing
 Of loss or gain ;
 Summer so glad with pleasure of bestowing
 What man will deign
 To take, and never own that he was fain !
 They take no thought for pain.

Yet on this earth there ever lacks completeness
 In present joy,
 If, half suspected, mix not with the sweetness
 Some sharp alloy,
 That may forbid our spirit's food to cloy,
 Yet not its taste destroy.

O russet woods, beneath whose sombre shading
 Lost sunbeams play,
 Is then that wealth of gold your lorn boughs lading
 All thrown away ?
 When crown'd in pomp by hand of dying day
 Have ye then naught to say ?

Is not the whisper of your branches, waving
 O'er golden fern,
 An echo of the heart's half-reck'd-of craving
 To know and learn
 How fare all things that never more return
 From earth, or wave, or urn ?

Is not your glory greater than in summer ?
 Ay, brighter far !
 The end is nigh, and he, the certain comer,
 Who lifts the bar
 That shuts the prison-door where weepers are,
 Is near ; and none may mar

Or beauty, or the quiet of long sleeping,
 But ye will rest
 In expectation ; and what hint of weeping
 With those, thrice blest,
 Clasp'd to the strong earth-mother's tender breast,
 Where no man may molest !

B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

HOPS AND HOPPING.

THE Father of History informs us that the Peonians made a brew, or *bruton*, of barley, and that the ancient Egyptians—the originators of luxury and refinement—did not disdain to drink beer. They enjoyed themselves in their day; and if the representations on their monuments do them no injustice, they were not always more sober than their successors in civilisation. In Roman times the Emperor Julian, although he adored his dear Lutetia (Paris), and loved the Gauls, long beards and rough manners included, never could endure their tipple, and wrote a facetious epigram, in which he said that ‘barley wine’ was no true wine at all. But we Christians, differing from the Apostate’s taste as well as religion, while we give the god of grapes his due, do not place him on so lofty a pedestal. ‘Give knaves their wine,’ cried Burns, in an outburst of contemptuous liberality. ‘A man’s a man for a’ that;’ but we fear that when he had the pint stoup in hand he could not always make the assertion very distinctly. Still, in the interests of sobriety we recommend the homely brew as less injurious than anything stronger. Until the reign of Brummel it was the general drink of the upper classes; and let those who think it beneath their dignity remember that even that exquisite, who could not mention the word ‘beer’ without a shudder, was more than once detected ‘malting it’ when he thought himself well out of view.

The virtues of bottled beer were discovered by good Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul’s. In

the reign of Queen Mary he was Master of Westminster School, and one day, when he was amusing himself with his rod (not his birch—but his fishing-rod), he received intelligence that Bonner had designs against him. Being by no means desirous of becoming a light in the literal sense of the word, he determined upon immediate flight; and having little time, and probably less appetite, he left his basket of prog, which he had provided for the day, under the bank, in a place where he had concealed it. Fortune favoured the future dean, who found a London merchant willing and ready to convey him across the seas. Returning in happier days, upon the accession of Elizabeth, he thought of revisiting the scene of his alarm, and there he discovered his basket, where he had left it, and in it his bottle of beer, or rather, as Fuller tells us, ‘no bottle, but a gun, such was the sound at the opening thereof.’

Hops are first mentioned by Pliny; the young shoots being eaten as a vegetable, like our asparagus. But until the sixteenth century they were not used as an ingredient in our beer; and when their cultivation was first introduced from Flanders, in 1525, an outcry was raised, and Parliament was petitioned against ‘a wicked weed that would spoil the taste of the drink, and endanger the people.’

But the piquant bitter found favour with the public, who relished this addition to the previously unmitigated sweetness. And so the hop was promoted from the

hedge-row to the 'garden,' and ever since labour and money have been constantly expended upon it. Kent and Sussex testify the change ; and when we look at the broad extent of the plantations we must not forget the cost at which they are maintained. It is estimated at from forty to one hundred and fifty pounds per acre ; and the sum is not surprising, for hops are most exhausting to the soil. The growers are obliged to expend all their farm manure upon them, and often have recourse to rags, stale fish, and other delicacies to tempt the appetite of the dainty weed. Great is the labour of digging round the 'hills,' cutting off suckers, tying up bines, and setting poles. But at length, to repay all this care, the plant rises joyously, and climbs aloft, and puts forth viny leaves and flowering tresses. Graceful truly it is, whether we see it hanging in festoons over the cottage porches or overhanging the long avenues of the hop-gardens. No fruit-bearing tree can vie with it in beauty, except, perhaps, the blithesome vine, as it springs from tree to tree in the sunny plains of Italy. The hop grows from ten to fourteen feet high, and is now often trained across from one pole to another, while the whole garden is surrounded with an ornamental trellis-work and with a belt of interlacing plants. In some places apple-trees grow among them, and the ruddy fruit gleams out among the yellow-flowering bines. In others the large white convolvulus (*sepium*), which is luxuriant in Kent, has outstripped the hop in climbing the pole, and throws out its beautiful white blossoms at the summit as a token of victory in the race.

Many fortunes are made and lost in hop-growing. It is a most speculative business, requiring a

large outlay, and depending on the changes of the weather. Wind and frost are most destructive to the gardens, and warm nights are especially desirable, as the plants grow mostly in their sleep. But there are more dangers than those arising from the variations of the climate, and there are other animals besides men who pay their court to the fair lady of the garden. Not only are her diseases manifold, but her flowers and leaves are so beset and assailed that they furnish an interesting study to the entomologist. Almost every month brings its proportion of destructiveness. The first insect that appears is the well-known wine-worm. Next, in March, comes the flea, similar to the turnip-fly or beetle, but larger. Then in May we have the aphides, or long-winged flies, which increase in a most alarming and, we may say, unnatural manner ; for the flies have no sooner deposited their young—or lice, as they are called—than these lice produce more lice within a few hours of their birth. The lady-bird—known in Kent by the homely name of field-bug—follows these prolific animals, and commits great havoc among them. She lays her eggs under the leaves, and thence arise the 'black niggers' or serpents. Finally, there is the frog-fly, the pupae of which are seen jumping about the 'hills' in great numbers, like shrimps on the sea-shore. They are very beautiful (as many destructive creatures are), being striped with every variety of colour.

The robin of September, twittering on the spray, heralds a merry hustling time, during which the hop-picking—or 'hopping,' as it is called—is to be performed. As the flowers of the 'gardens' begin to get brown, strange-looking people, in very heterogeneous

costumes, make their appearance about all the villages and roads. By degrees the country begins to present the appearance of a gipsy encampment. Fires are seen everywhere blazing by hedge and highway. Here we find round-headed huts, formed of branches of trees, covered with a motley heap of old clothes of all sizes and colours; there is drawn up a gaily-painted 'cart,' which provides its more luxurious occupants with small but clean and comfortable beds; farther on rises a group of white tents of very pleasing and inviting aspect, but not always proof against the inclemency of the weather. But the great mass of the pickers are accommodated in 'hopper-houses,' belonging to the farmers in the neighbourhood, the furniture of which consists only of some clean straw to lie on. The best of these establishments are built in low squares, and have separate rooms for each family; but in the worst there are no such divisions, and the people are herded together as promiscuously as cattle. But however rough this may be, it is a pleasant change to many of them from their stifling alleys in London. Although so many have arrived, the cry is still 'They come!' and they are of all classes, from the most wretched miserable beggar to the reduced tradesman. Some of the schools are closed, that the children may be available. Many hail from the Minories and other parts of London, from Berkshire, Sussex, Surrey, and even longer distances. Some, who form the rank and file, walk all the way, followed by strings of barefooted children, and sleep under hedges or, by good fortune, in stables; those who can afford it carrying shoes in their hands, which they put on when approaching a town. Others come down in the cheap trains,

which are run principally on Sunday for their especial benefit; while some will not take advantage of this provision, but proudly proclaim that they will not travel in a common train, and don't wish to be 'pushed and scrouged by all the rough people.' The more aristocratic pickers keep the above-mentioned carts or wagons solely for the purpose of travelling and living in them at this season of the year.

The actual work of hop-picking is performed mostly by women and children; but a certain number of men are always employed, who go about with hooks and levers, and take up the poles, cut down the plants, and lay them on the 'bins.' These receptacles consist of wooden frames containing large canvas bags, holding about twenty bushels each, and are set down in long rows in the gardens beside the bines of hops. As you look from one end to the other of these, the scene is very striking. You might imagine you were looking down some kind of bazaar. Shawls and rugs are hanging up all along to keep off the sun, and two rows of people, of every age from five to seventy, and dressed in every variety of costume—some of the women very picturesque in broad-brimmed hats and brightly coloured jackets—are bending over the sides of the bins, their fingers flying as quickly as if their lives depended upon speed. Some little toddles are sitting on the ground, or picking hops into their perambulators; but they are soon tired, although a few of them will pick a couple of bushels in a day. But those who are a little older outstrip their parents with their nimble fingers, and a 'good child' who knows the art of picking will earn more than a grown person. The farmers will not allow any leaves to be left with the flowers, and

when the hops are small the labour is much greater, and more money is expected ; but the usual ‘tally’ is between seven and eight bushels for a shilling. There are constant disputes between the workers and employers on this subject ; one party threatening to strike, the other telling them to do so, and that they can find plenty of fresh hands. Many families earn about 10*l.* during the season, and count upon this money to provide themselves with clothes for the year.

These nomad immigrants are looked upon with considerable disfavour by the neighbouring farmers and villagers, who regard them as ‘rough’ customers, ‘gipsies, Irish, and Londoners.’ I could add Indians to the list. They have something also to justify their ill opinion in the mysterious disappearance of a considerable portion of the apples and potatoes in their neighbourhood. In the hop-gardens themselves there is a great deal of badinage going forward, but generally of a good-humoured kind ; and if a lady or gentleman enters, the hop-pickers are ready to wipe his or her boots with a hoppine—an old custom, to be duly followed by a donation. They are not indifferent to this latter part of the ceremony, and their constant readiness to ask money for the ‘poor hoppers’ at one time greatly annoyed a friend of mine, who lived near one of the gardens, and whose favourite motto was, ‘If you take a farthing from a thousand pounds, it is a thousand pounds no longer.’ Often had the swarthy hop-dames solicited his bounty, but in vain. At last one evening they entirely surrounded him, and while some stopped his progress and insisted that he should ‘pay his footing,’ a few of the more active ran a bin up behind him with such force that it fairly carried him off his legs, and he fell

back into twenty bushels of hops. There, amid laughing and chaffing, they held him down, struggling and half-smothered, until his sentence was duly pronounced. It was that he should either pay twenty good shillings on the spot, or receive as many kisses from the ugliest old woman among them. For a time he still hesitated, mindful of his maxim ; but at last, on the near approach of the executioner, he gave way and paid the money.

There is a difference in the habitation of the pickers in this respect, that some live close to their work, and others at a little distance from it. At Golden Green, near Hadlow, for instance, there is a large establishment close to a bend in the Medway, and those who take up their abode in it are known as the ‘Lake Hoppers,’ and perform the work round the vicinity. A short time since a cart containing thirty-two of them was passing over the bridge by this ‘lake,’ when the bank gave way ; the whole of them were precipitated into the water, and all, with one exception, were drowned.

When the pickers are hard at work, carts are constantly employed in carrying the hops into the outhouses, where the drying process is going forward. They are spread six inches thick upon hair-cloths, generally about twenty feet wide, and large fires of Welsh coal and charcoal are lighted under them. A quantity of brimstone is also burnt, to give the hops a yellow colour, although it does not improve them otherwise. The scent arising from this operation can be perceived all round the neighbourhood ; it is very powerful and aromatic, and the men who finally tread the hops into the ‘pockets,’ or sacks, are so much overcome by it that they have to be constantly changed.

Very pretty is the train of hop-pickers returning home in the golden rays of sunset. It sometimes appears to be interminable, and is composed almost entirely of women and children. Some have bound honeysuckles round their heads, others flowering hop-bines, which hang down upon their shoulders in graceful clusters, and many carry long poles in their hands as trophies of their work. There are the old and gray, the young and frolicsome. Great is the laughing and chaffing among the latter; and we are reminded of the saucy habits of the grape-gatherers of ancient Greece, whose raillery became the foundation of comedy. Some are playing and dancing, others singing, some threatening rude reprisals, such as 'smacking' one another's faces. Their costumes are sufficiently heterogeneous and negligent to be picturesque. Many have large straw hats, and show that they have more taste for bright colours than for whole garments. Bottles and babies are general accompaniments to the older and graver part of the procession, and cloaks or shawls to protect from rain or sun. Baskets are also common, and here and there a tin pot or kettle shows that they have been reviving

'The days when we went gipsying,
A long time ago.'

The evenings—especially those on which the strangers are to return—are devoted to less innocent

and unobjectionable revelry. Bacchus spreads his influence round those who have been doing his work, and no age or sex can entirely escape his sway. The pickers who return to their homes by cheap trains are generally carried in long carts to the railway station, and frequently sing in chorus all the way, sometimes with more taste than might be expected. When they are deposited—often to wait a long time for the train—they are soon again at their wild amusements. Fights occasionally occur, both among men and women. Some of the buxom lasses, not content with strong words, resort to more unkind arguments. These are generally bestowed upon their husbands, but sometimes on other fair neighbours; and you may hear one, who has been worsted in the fray, calling out in a depreciatory voice, 'Fair play, fair play; strike a woman of your own age.' Many of the women are as bad as the men, but in general you find the wife beseeching and labouring her husband, who is lying on the ground perfectly helpless, and can only reward her exertions with a benign smile.

And now the train comes up, and takes in its human load, and the hop-pickers return to their wretched homes in the courts and alleys of London, replenished in pocket and invigorated in health, but deprived of the pure air which has been so beneficial to them in their annual 'hopping' outing.

RIVER RHYMES.

No. III. A TINY TRIP.

I.

THE BILL OF LADING.

SHE was cargo and crew,
She was boatswain and skipper,
She was passenger too,
Of the 'Nutshell' canoe ;
And the eyes were so blue
Of this sweet tiny tripper !
She was cargo and crew,
She was boatswain and skipper !

II.

THE PILOT.

How I bawled, 'Ship, ahoy !'
Hard by Medmenham Ferry !
And she answered with joy,
She would like a convoy,
And would love to employ
A bold pilot so merry :
How I bawled, 'Ship, ahoy !'
Hard by Medmenham Ferry !

III.

THE VOYAGE.

'Neath the trees gold and red,
In that bright autumn weather,
When our white sails were spread,
O'er the waters we sped
Down to sweet Maidenhead :
How we drifted together !
'Neath the trees gold and red,
In that bright autumn weather !

IV.

THE HAVEN.

O, 'tis pleasant to dine
In October at Skindle's !
And to muse o'er the wine—
With small hand in mine—
I protest is divine,
And the daylight soon dwindles !
O, 'tis pleasant to dine
In October at Skindle's !

AULD LANG SYNE IN THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS.

MEN's lives do not always run on in a plainly defined course, like the great North road between London and York, fair and straight, and wide enough to admit of other vehicles besides their own having elbow-room and space to display their proportions and paces. There must be ups and downs ; but then these are only natural in a world where birth and marriage, death and decay, make up the inevitable order of things. Existence would not be worth having without them, and the wholesome, holy, helpful joys and sorrows that they bring. It is given to some of us to go on our pilgrimage in quiet fashion, treading the beaten track, feeling that nothing out of the common lot of humanity has happened to us, and sleeping our last sleep in a green old age, full of years and honour.

But with others it is not so. We have our life-trees uprooted, see our best work cut short, our dearest hopes extinguished, our best-beloved, with all accumulated gifts and graces, lost and wasted, and our brightest stars quenched in utter darkness. We are the people who know what life is : *Messieurs les autres* have only a little quiet consciousness of vegetation—seed-time, harvest, and rest. Still, in stirring, tumultuous, and stormy times it does us good to look back and realise those which were not so fierce and fiery, when peace brooded over village homesteads, and there was no competition, no race for wealth, and consequently less impatience, less temptation, and less blight. Even the remembrance of such a golden

age, of quiet days and peaceful nights, of what we somewhat disdainfully call the jog-trot of rural existence, may calm for a few moments our fevered spirits, and enable us to live, during a brief interregnum from our griefs and cares, in the Elysium that expected to-day to be as yesterday, and to-morrow as the time before the Flood.

Previous to shooting Niagara and facing what has to come after, let us mentally spend a little space in a rotten borough, a nook among the Chiltern Hills, far enough from the busy hum of men to stagnate and keep green, yet so near to the modern Babylon that a two hours' journey might bring the monarchs of Mincing-lane into such complete isolation and quietness that the sound of a whole horse going down the rustic street would be the sole outdoor event of an evening. There are men and women not a few, in the stunning tide of the million-peopled city, whose eyes will fill and their hearts swell with memory's waves as they read these scant gleanings of a dying day, a departing generation, and lands that have long changed owners. The new masters make good and beneficent use of them, and the old ones would not regret the alterations, if they could rise with purged vision from their graves, and have a glimpse of the differences Time has wrought. An old inhabitant may, however, be not only pardoned, but, perchance, accompanied, as he retraces the quiet lanes to the gray church and rambling parsonage where Frank Harcourt was once vicar, and Simeon Snaith and Robert Dixon

his curates. Let us recall the situation. Seven miles across the hills from the nearest railway station, nestled under the beechwoods and looking right across the fertile vale of Aylesbury, Lease-over thirty years ago was perfectly innocent of gas, though not ignorant of Mr. Disraeli, and rejoiced in the mementoes of its past, while utterly regardless of its nonentity in the future. The tilted carrier's cart and daily coach to and from London, the cage for befooled bipeds and pound for wandering quadrupeds, were still in full force, though they have now all vanished before the march of progress. Stanch Conservatives were all the men, and the women ditto—as best befitted the weaker vessels, who would have been thought to be in a very bad way indeed if they had dared to think for themselves instead of adopting the opinions of their lords and masters.

At the Great House, inhabited by a brave old Indian general, were relics and ruins of an ancient monastery, and about a mile off, down a shady bridle-path, was what remained of a convent, Paradise by name. Three sides of a quadrangle were left, and adapted for a girls' school, kept by four of the stateliest and godliest of gentlewomen that ever wore their days away in helping the young idea to shoot in the right direction. There were some curious old arched doorways; the refectory had become the schoolroom, and the abbess's parlour a class- or music-room. The mill attached to the premises was let off; but the terraced garden behind, with its pleached alleys, clipped hedges, and murmurous bees, sloped to the running stream, and is remembered as a dream of quaint and antiquated beauty by all owners of hearts and souls who ever wandered about, and learned perforce

to love it. What untold pleasure it was to watch the trout leaping and plashing in the water, to be allowed to go down as far as the little island in mid-stream, where the swans built, or to help gather the lavender and sweet herbs for winter use!

There was a tradition that, in some part of an old building which was pulled down to make room for an infant-school about forty years before, Roger Bacon had really compounded the first gunpowder, and the earliest use he made of it was to frighten a gang of robbers who lived in the neighbouring woods; but whether there was any truth in the tale no one was learned enough to declare.

Work and wages, school, church and parson, had rolled on at a slow contented rate for many years, when the vicar—Mr. Staypole—was found dead in his bed one Monday morning, from the combined effects of the recent county election, and the exertion of the previous Sunday services. He was an old bachelor, whose comforts in life had been his pipe and his politics, and the thorn in his side a little Baptist chapel, which had sprung up under the very windows of his parsonage, and the anathemas which were declaimed from its pulpit. The living was in the influence, though not exactly in the gift, of a rich and pious banking firm, who, ignorant of the coming strife among the creeds, sent the scion intended for the Church to school at Rugby, and thence to Trinity, that largest minded of all Cambridge houses. He had grown up over six feet high, and proportionately broad, with a healthy love of life, and a considerable share of muscular Christianity. He was, moreover, a gentleman of the highest breeding—a much more requisite qualification for his calling than is

generally imagined. When first inducted to Leaseover he found his church a mouldy well, the vicarage little better than a barn, the chapel a hotbed of discord, the parish a pigsty of drunkenness, and the outlying hamlets strongholds of barbarism. He immediately put two stoves and a chamber-organ in the church, repaired the churchyard-wall, and converted its paths from miry sloughs to passable and pleasant ways ; and having been so lavish as to order more gravel than he wanted, sent the surplus to the Baptist chapel, with directions to his men to make those paths dry and sound before the next Sunday. It is needless to say that Frank Harcourt thenceforth met with no opposition from that quarter ; the congregation of the Bethel grew less and less, while that in the church increased and multiplied from week to week, till there was next to no dissent to contend with. The church, having in former days been part of the monastic establishment, was at some little distance from the town, and the nearest way to it was through a succession of fields, with gates between, which went by the name of the Herring Path. It was a short cut to a good many houses and farms, and the poor folks who frequented it observed before long that the new parson, instead of banging the gates behind him, or rushing headlong through, as if they were made solely for his own comfort and convenience, was actually in the habit of holding them open for any woman or child who might be a few paces behind him, as courteously as if she were the first lady in the land. He did this once or twice for Betty Leatherton, the gipsy centenarian of the district, and exchanged a few pleasant words with her, and she immediately spread his fame as a 'raal

gen'elman' far and wide in her peregrinations among the villages.

After adding a few habitable rooms to the vicarage, our hero married a wife whose kith and kin were among our country's noblest, and who made herself as much at home in the poorest hovel in the parish as she ever had been in her father's house. We do not mean that she indulged in the liberties which so many visitors of the poor allow themselves—such as opening the door without knocking, peering into their domestic arrangements, and intruding on them, in season and out of season, under the excuse of love for their souls ; but that she treated them with the same respect and kindness as if they had been her equals, with whom she exchanged a friendly call. No class of people appreciate such true politeness more than the poor, though it is but seldom they receive it. Hand in hand the Harcourts lived and worked ; and though after a time the annual increase of the family kept the mother pretty much at home, she was always accessible, with a willing ear, a sympathising word, and gentle womanly counsel for all who sought her help. Now the Reverend Frank was a man of boundless energy, and could not be content without trying to civilise the hamlets which lay among the hills, as soon as he had got things into working order in the town below ; and to this end he engaged two curates, one of them being Robert Dixon, who was intended to live at Lee, and the other Simeon Snaith, whose sphere of action was to be Scrubwood.

Simeon had previously been a Scripture-reader, that is to say, a connecting link between the lower laity and the Establishment, and he was principally remarkable for being the victim of a peculiar family nomenclature. Our readers must

remember that there are far more odd events and characters in real life than ever find their way into the flowery fields of fiction ; and this little record is, save for some slight disguise, absolute matter of fact ; though, as the actors in it are all gone in peace to the ‘ land o’ the leal,’ it is perfectly allowable to reproduce them, especially as both place and circumstances were in so primitive a corner that they appear well-nigh improbable to those of us who are in the full whirl of society and the excitements of modern life. The parents of our curate were well-to-do, though not rich, London tradespeople ; and being young and full of hope and splendid possibilities, they emulated the example of the patriarch Jacob, so far at least as their part went towards increasing the number of her Britannic Majesty’s subjects. When the first son was born they named him Reuben, then came Simeon, Levi, Judah, Asshur, Issachar, and Dan. They advanced no farther, to their great disappointment. But in process of time there arrived a little girl, who, for consistency’s sake, was called Dinah, and there the race of wished-for patriarchs came to a stand-still. Simeon was the only one who took to his Bible kindly ; and as he did not see that nineteenth-century trade was conducted on anything like Christian principles, he became a street-preacher, and ultimately a Scripture-reader, from which position it was a much easier step to holy orders thirty years ago than it is now. Curates had not then struck for better pay, and 60*l.* per annum with a ‘ title’ was considered good. At all events he was the very man to make that sum of money keep him in ease and comfort, and to have something to spare into the bargain. Strange as it may seem, he had cherished in his City life a pas-

sion for botany, and in his rare intervals of leisure had scoured all the country within walking distance of London for specimens. He looked forward to his rural curacy with great delight, as affording him boundless opportunities of pursuing his favourite study, and took with him, as companions of his solitude, a tame Demerara rat and an Australian crow, which performed marvels of whistling. The only house in the hamlet of Scrubwood at which Mr. Snaith could possibly be accommodated was a primitive sort of hostel, kept by fairly respectable and thriving people, and yept the Leather Bottle ; and when the good vicar took two closets (rooms they could hardly be called) for him, one of which had been the landlady’s lace-room till her eyes grew too dim to work at her pillow any longer, he felt that he was killing several birds with one stone : putting a wholesome sort of restraint on an out-of-the-way public-house, and securing the maximum of comfort for his curate combined with the minimum of expense.

Robert Dixon was of quite another stamp : he never alluded to any circumstances of his earlier life prior to entering as a sizar at St. John’s, and designated himself ‘ an earnest student.’ He was one to whom a book was a book, and beloved in a certain way, provided it either coincided with his own private opinions or was approved of by the magnates of the party in the Church with whom he had cast in his lot ; and he brought down to his new curacy so many old tea-chests filled with volumes that Mr. Harcourt had great difficulty in getting them transported to the farmhouse at Lee which was to be his abode. He also began to have serious doubts as to whether an individual who owned so much literature was

likely to be the right man in the right place, or whether he would not prefer the study of Horace and Virgil, or that of the Greek and Hebrew texts, to holding cottage lectures and beating up recruits for the Sunday school. When, however, he saw them unpacked, and found that they chiefly consisted of old missionary and Bible Society reports, and was gravely told that they were preserved on account of the invaluable sermons at the beginning of each, he laughed to himself, and came to the conclusion that his senior curate's studies and his parish work were not likely to come into very dangerous collision. If the truth must be told, Mr. Dixon felt that in coming to Leaseover, and being relegated to the charge of the roughest portion of its scattered and ignorant population, he was, in some measure, a missionary in a heathen country, and he certainly did find himself in a very outlandish and uncouth one. The very name of the little farm at which lodgings had been taken for him was uncanny, not to say cannibal, for it rejoiced in the appellation of 'Dead Men's Bones,' while the brown furze-sprinkled tract which stretched around it was called 'Conscience Fields,' and the wood opposite was known as 'Concord.' The vicar himself could but think the accommodation was rather rough, and therefore kept the young man at his own house for a day or two while he prepared him by degrees for what he had undertaken. It was on a Monday in the early spring that he announced to his coadjutor, after luncheon, that he had sent off the last of his baggage, and was ready to devote the remainder of the day to seeing him installed in his future habitation. Robert made his adieux to Mrs. Harcourt, and looked with a

little dismay at the paraphernalia in which his *chef* was preparing to invest his lower limbs before starting on the expedition.

' You must set up gaiters and hobnails, my friend, for this country,' said Frank, while the curate (who only stood four feet eleven in his stockings) rolled up his trousers and glanced at his town-made boots. They went round by the great house—all gables and ivy, past a well-head of sparkling water, and then up a turning where white violets grew thick as daisies under the hedges, but the centre of which was a conglomeration of cart-ruts and interminable puddles.

' This is Hogtrough-lane,' said the vicar cheerfully, to the small man who plodded beside, or often hung behind, him.

' Not a bad name,' was the reply. ' And what do you call that tumble-down-looking cluster of cottages across the fields?'

' The World's End,' he answered, in all good faith; the vicar was used to the name, and did not for a moment think how so odd a designation might sound to a stranger.

Poor Robert thought it must be all a joke, and being entirely devoid of any sense of humour, and having an exalted idea of the dignified position of a pastor of souls, he made a laconic rejoinder, and endeavoured to lead the conversation into what he thought a more profitable channel. This pious design was, however, frustrated by the apparition of a middle-aged unkempt-looking woman sitting down on a heap of stones, with a sack half full of something beside her.

' Good-day to you, Susan,' said the vicar; ' are you having a rest?'

' Yes, sir; but I must be a-gettin' on,' she replied, without the least attempt at rising to drop a curtsey, as Dixon thought she ought to have done.

'Shall I help you up, then?' said Mr. Harcourt, holding out his strong hand, which she took and made good use of, like one who knew that he meant it. 'You must be going our way, for there is no other till we get to the common; I'll take the sack.'

'No, sir, ye marnt du that!' exclaimed Susan.

'I shall, though; I am not going to let you climb this hill with it on your back when I have not so much as a walking-stick to carry. Here goes!' And he swung it over his shoulders, and tramped merrily on, while Susan said,

'I be most shaimed to let ye du it, sir; for 'tis chitlins' (*Anglice* chitterlings, *i.e.* a pig's entrails), 'and they be ant claned.'

This explanation made no difference, and the sack was not transferred to its owner till the gate of 'Dead Men's Bones' was reached. There was an apology for a farmyard between that and the house, and a duckpond immediately under the cleanest-looking window, which was that of the curate's sitting-room. Mrs. Harcourt had thoughtfully sent up a few necessaries, and the two men asked for a cup of tea. They had the satisfaction of seeing a tin kettle forthwith dipped in the duck-pond and set down hissing and sputtering on the fire, which was the only bright thing in the room; and when it boiled and the beverage was made, they had to drink it without milk, as the inmates never used any themselves, and had no one to send to the nearest house where it was likely that any could be had. Robert's ideal offarm-lodgings was rudely shaken by his new experience: he had pictured to himself a Paradise of new milk and cream, fresh butter, and new-laid eggs; and was disappointed to find he was located in a good-sized cottage, facing a com-

mon, where the occupation of a dozen acres of poor land only enabled its tenant to keep a few sheep, a couple of pigs, two sorry-looking horses, and a flock of geese and ducks. Mr. Harcourt, who, on his previous visits, had merely satisfied himself that there were two tolerable rooms containing the necessities of life, stood aghast at what he saw, and rather unceremoniously cut short some of his curate's remarks on the dangers of Puseyism, as it was then called, that he might go home by a circuitous route which would lead him past a farm where he hoped to be able to order a daily supply of milk for his use. The water question, too, troubled him not a little: he was a total abstainer for example's sake, and his two helpers willingly followed in his steps; but he felt that he could not condemn either of them to drink water from a dirty pond. A few inquiries elicited the fact that Lee lay so high among the hills, and springs were so scarce, that there was not a single house with a well; so he lost no time in arranging that the old man who acted as letter-carrier whenever there were letters to be taken to that remote region of the world should carry a can of spring-water daily up to the curate's lodgings.

The experiment of civilizing the inhabitants of Lee by the moral and religious influence of a resident clergyman did not answer. Perhaps it might have done, had it been Frank Harcourt's lot to live there; but this is difficult to say, and it only remains for us to tell in what manner it came to an end, after barely three months' trial. Towards the close of May, Leaseover was the scene of a combined cattle and pleasure fair; and the vicar's righteous soul was vexed within him at the presence and doings of the gipsies, who

came from far and near to dispose of their horses and tinware, and mend the bottoms of all the dilapidated rush and cane chairs in the neighbourhood. Besides a few of the Rommany, there was a nondescript horde of vagrants and drunkards, who would hang about for weeks at the little out-of-the-way public-houses, which had been their haunts for years. Like so many country parsons, he was a magistrate, and had set his heart on restraining disorder and drunkenness, as much as possible, within his parish; and succeeded very well himself in the town, where he went from the Two Brewers to the Shoulder of Mutton, and thence to the King and Queen, and gave a friendly look in again upon them all nearly every time he went up or down the street on fair-days. But he did not comprehend that what he, in the strength of his six feet two, and the prestige of his comfortable fortune, could do with impunity, could not be accomplished by another man with equally good intentions but none of his advantages.

He told Robert Dixon to keep a sharp look-out on the Brown Cow up at Lee, and use his utmost endeavours to prevent any disorder. Unfortunately that gentleman had very little idea how to go about it, but supposed the correct thing would be to pay a pastoral visit to the Brown Cow rather late in the evening—exhort Mose Brackley on the propriety of refusing to draw more than one pint of beer for any man, and if the gipsies arrived while he was there, as he half hoped, half feared they might, give them a small lecture on the necessity of forsaking evil ways, turning to respectable methods of getting a living, and, though last not least, to his thinking, shunning any approach to the errors of Popery.

Mose received him with civility, having found by experience that he meant no harm to any one, but in the recesses of his rough mind ‘wished that there little chap wur saafe in’s bed,’ as he told his gossips afterwards. The curate was still there when a noisy, singing, quarrelsome crew was heard approaching. He had half a mind to ask if he might go out by the back way, but it was too craven a thing to do, and as he sagely reflected gooseberry-bushes afforded no cover, even to a man of his inches; so he plucked up courage to stand his ground to a certain extent, though it well-nigh failed him at the last moment, and he retreated behind the door. Mose, foreseeing that if the parson were ill-treated he should run the risk of losing his license, went out to meet his customers, told them who was within, and extorted something like a promise that they would deal gently with him. The biggest and brawniest gipsy advanced to the Brown Cow, went in, shut the door, and looked the trembling cleric in the face.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘you get out o’ this; an’ if you don’t, my mates’ll make ye. I could kick a little un like you into the middle o’ next week, and by —— I wull tu, if you ain’t off!’

Dixon rather ran than walked, but he reached home unmolested; and from that day forth gave the vicar no rest till he consented to give up his pet scheme of locating him at Lee and allowed him to take shelter in the town, and work more wisely under his immediate supervision. Poor fellow! he lived to know the lowest depths of misery, and look back on his abode at Lee as a bed of roses!

Matters went better at Scrubwood. Simeon Snaith did indeed preach horrors of fire and brimstone, but the people listened to

him, and the wandering Ranters said he gave 'powerful discourses.' No extraordinary adventures befell him; and finding nearly as great a variety of wild-flowers among the fields and woods as can be gathered anywhere except on the lower slopes of the Alps, he compiled a *hortus siccus*, which was the solace and delight of the remainder of his days. He loved and understood his flock; and they so far reciprocated the feeling, that to the end of their connection there was an unmistakable *entente cordiale* between them.

That end came all too soon. The busy cheerful vicar, in the midst of his happy life and prosperous work, was garnered by the Great Reaper, while so many cumberers of the ground were left. He welcomed his sixth babe into the world, and received it publicly into the Church; and having seen its mother smiling once more in her accustomed place, started one December morning to London, on both parochial and personal business. A few days sufficed to finish it—the last purchase was made, the Christmas gifts were all packed up, when, as he crossed the threshold of his brother's house, the warm heart ceased to beat, the active brain to think, and he fell. They picked him up quite dead, and sent word to his home; and the next morning there was an exceeding great and bitter cry throughout the parish, for the friend of all was gone, and they mourned as if one lay dead in every house. Such a scene as his funeral can never be forgotten, and testified to all present what a clergyman may be if he loves his work and his fellows.

Many dignitaries were there, but they thought it kindest to let his curates read the service as best they could, and they took it as the last privilege and greatest boon.

'He said I looked pretty nigh friz [frozen] o' Sunday week and sent me over to the missis for a new flannel petticoat, an' told me to be sure and put it on afore I went home,' sobbed a woman, with a rusty bit of black ribbon tied across an old blue bonnet.

'He guv our Betsy a pint o' porter every day for a fortnight to strengthen her up when she had her misfortin', though it were a love-child!' said a hard-featured man in a smock-frock, with unwonted tears in his eyes.

'When Bill came out of jaäl he guv him a job o' diggin', and axed Muster Warney to take him on ag'in; an' tis tu year sin, an' he han't neverstole no moore,' added a publican and sinner, who had once been his determined opponent.

Amid such comments and testimonies as these he was laid to rest opposite his study-window, and the white-marble cross set up to mark the spot tells passers-by that he was only thirty-six years old when the Master called him.

Robert Dixon was appointed curate in charge till the living was filled up, and then departed to what he spoke of as 'a wider sphere' while Simeon Snaith sought for and obtained a curacy in an East-end parish, where he fell a victim to cholera two years later.

Some of us pay an occasional visit to what is to us the shrine of the best of saints—a true man. But

'Old times are changed, old manners gone.'

the vicarage is deserted and another built; gas-lamps make darkness visible in the rambling street where there are few to walk; the most elaborate of ritual is performed in a well-nigh empty church; a Mechanics' Institute stands in the old market-place where once the fair was held; and one of the bravest of old Rugby comrades sleeps beneath the elms.

MY HARVEST 'EVE.'

O for the glory of harvest time !
I sing it in song and sing it in rhyme,
With blush of the beauteous summer's prime
 On its dewy dawns,
 And its hazy morns,
And gathered grainage of golden corns.

O for the glory of harvest time !
I weave it in song and sing it in rhyme,
While happy hours their passage chime ;
 And every breath
 So softly saith
'There's life new born with the summer's death.'

O for the glory of golden noon,
And purpled heather, and ripened bloom,
And full-orbed splendour of harvest moon—
 The dangerous moon,
 That fades so soon
From starry splendour to starless gloom !

* * * * *
O for the peerless face that shines
Out from the lattice beyond the limes !
Harvest queen of my harvest time,
How shall I praise her in song or rhyme,
 With her tangled tresses
 And eyes divine ?

I'll set her amidst the ripened sheaves,
Or golden glory of burnished leaves :
Flowers and fruits in the autumn eves,
Fairest 'Eve' of them all is she—
 My harvest queen
 From o'er the lea !

O for the lady of brow serene !
How shall I praise her, the manor-queen,
With the ebon gloss on her ringlets' sheen ?
 Never a tangled tress is seen,
 Nor saucy eyes to dance and gleam,
 Like eyes that dazzle my rhymes, I ween.

O for a heart to shrine them both !
Either to lose or leave I'm loth,
For love has grown with the harvest growth.

O gathered grain,
 Know you this pain ?
Can severed ties be blent again ?

The grain is gathered, shadows fall
O'er land and lea like sombre pall ;
My heart and I are still in thrall ;
 Your eyes will shine
 Starlike to mine,
My Eve, for every harvest time !

RITA.

